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THE UK'S NUMBER C S GUITAR MAGAZINE

Bass Guitar Magazine

65 KILLER PAGES OF ESSENTIAL BASS INSPIRATION

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Matt Kean brings the noise!

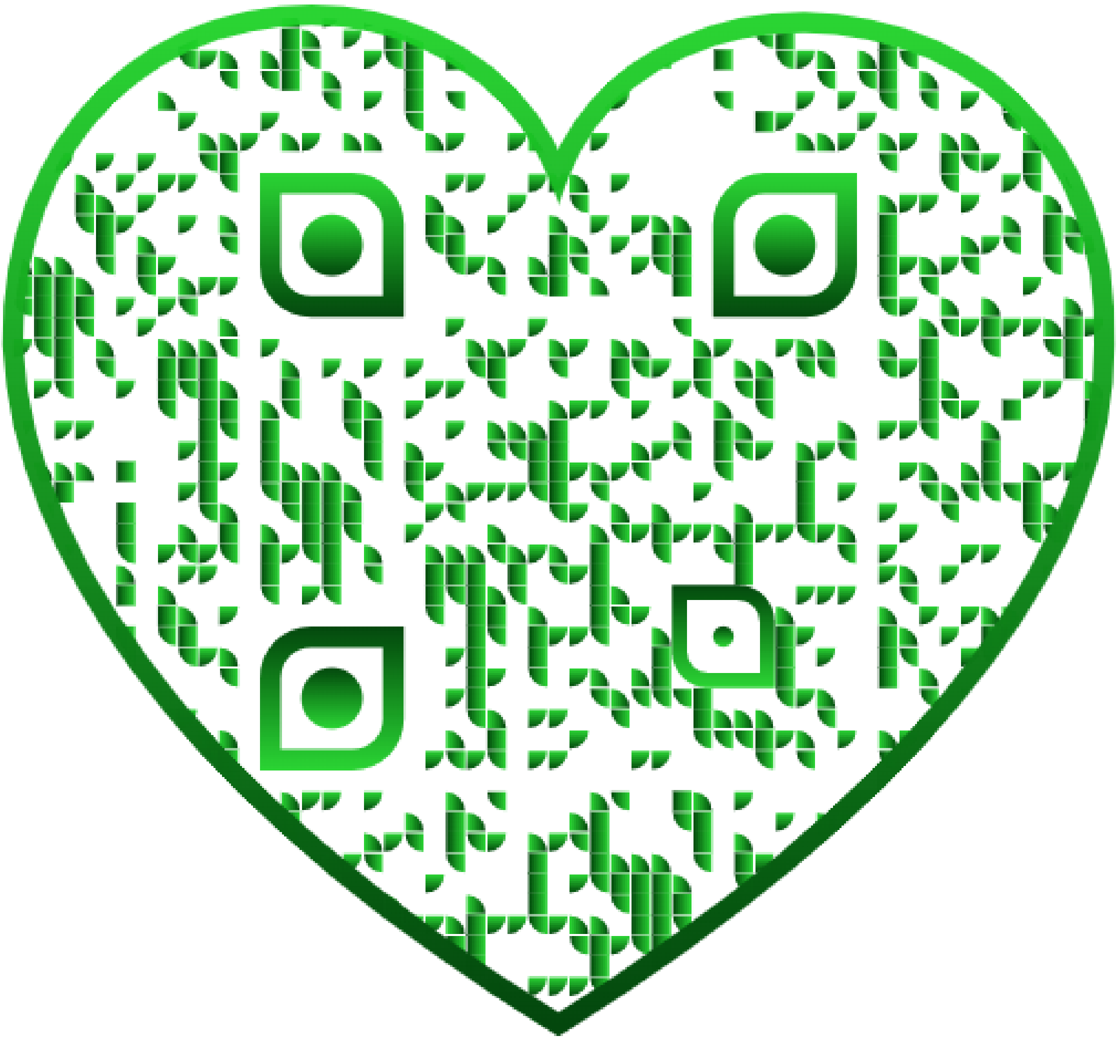
BEST BASS GEAR OF 2016

ALVIN GIBBS UK SUBS

JULIA RUZICKA FUTURE OF THE LEFT

WILL CARRUTHERS SPIRITUALIZED

IDA NIELSEN AND STU HAMM CONFIRMED FOR THE LONDON BASS GUITAR SHOW 2017



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EDITOR Joel McIver, joel.mciver@futurenet.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR Kate Puttick
TECHNICAL CONSULTANT Stuart Clayton
CONTRIBUTORS Angus Batey, Bob Battersby, Duff Battye, Andy Baxter, Nick Beggs, Jeff Berlin, Jamie Blaine, Silvia Bluejay, Mike Brooks, Joe Burcaw, Dave Clarke, Stuart Clayton, Ben Cooper, Joe Daly, Jon D'Auria, Hywel Davies, Daryl Easlea, David Etheridge, Mike Flynn, Paul Geary, Ian Glasper, Joel Graham, Ruth Goller, Spencer Grady, Paolo Gregoletto, Hugh Gulland, Chris Hanby, Huw Hopkins, Andy Hughes, Ken Hunt, Kevin Johnson, Steve Lawson, Phil Mann, Lee Marlow, Julian Marszalek, George Martin, Michael McKeegan, Stewart McKinsey, Greg Moffitt, Chris Mugan, Douglas Mullen, Ellen O'Reilly, Franc O'Shea, Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, Harry Paterson, Dayal Patterson, Raz Rauf, Alison Richter, Steven Rosen, Teri Saccone, Kevin Sanders, Amit Sharma, Ken Sharp, Joe Shooman, Rob Statham, Scott Surine, Jon Thorne, Freddy Villano, Ray Walker, Alex Webster, Sam Wise
ADVERTISING SALES Guy Meredith
GRAPHIC DESIGN Steve Dawson
AD DESIGN Jon Hyland
COVER IMAGE Ollie Curtis
STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY Eckie, Olly Curtis and Stephen Kelly

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At a period in history when America is occupying our attention in many diverse ways, both cultural and otherwise, it's interesting – and a little surprising – to discover that a band from Sheffield has suddenly become pretty much our biggest export, in terms of loud music anyway. Bring Me The Horizon, five ordinary blokes with extraordinary talents, have just swept through a sequence of sold-out arenas, all without a gimmick or even a headline. Bassist Matt Kean, in his first ever solo cover, explains how the heck they did it.

Elsewhere in our last issue of the year (or first, depending on on-sale versus cover date) we get up close and personal with a bevy of amazing bassists from the punk, rock and indie fields, and we bring you a round-up of our favourite bass gear from 2016. The year may be remembered as the one in which we lost Bowie and Prince among others, or the one when political upheavals made the news, but for us it'll also be the 12 months when some genuinely inspiring new bass equipment was released. Go straight there and see which bits of fantastic kit got our vote.

Oh, and if you're waiting to find out who's appearing at the London Bass Guitar Show on 4 and 5 March, I have two words for you: Hamm and Nielsen! All is revealed in our news section. More announcements coming your way…

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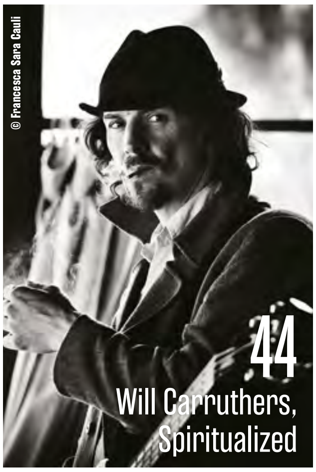
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THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by BGM's team of intrepid newshounds

FUTURISTIC

Akai's Deep Impact bass synth has won a loyal following over the years, including *BGM* alumni Paul Turner and Chris Wolstenholme, and second-hand versions of the original stompbox sell for eye-watering sums on eBay. Thankfully, Panda Audio have relaunched the unit as the Future Impact I. Delivering Moog-esque synth sounds and a fat low end, the new box features 99 presets compared to the original's nine, a desktop PC editor, and MIDI in/out and other bassist-friendly spec. Watch out for our review.

http://pandamidi.com/bass-guitar-synth

FIRST ARTISTS FOR LBGS 2017!

The London Bass Guitar Show, in association with this very magazine, enters its sixth year in business with the announcement of two incredible star performances. Ida Nielsen of 3rd Eye Girl, the band formed by the late, great Prince back in 2014, and the bass icon Stuart Hamm are the first artists to be revealed – and we promise you that more amazing bassists are on the way. Taking place at London's Olympia on 4 and 5 March 2017, the London Bass Guitar Show is this country's only bass-centred event of its type and has been an annual fixture in bassists' calendars for years. Grab yourself a ticket from www.londonbassguitarshow.com in due course and keep an eye on our social media for more announcements as they come.

www.facebook.com/londonbassguitarshow, @bassguitarshow

©Jack Frisch/Markbass

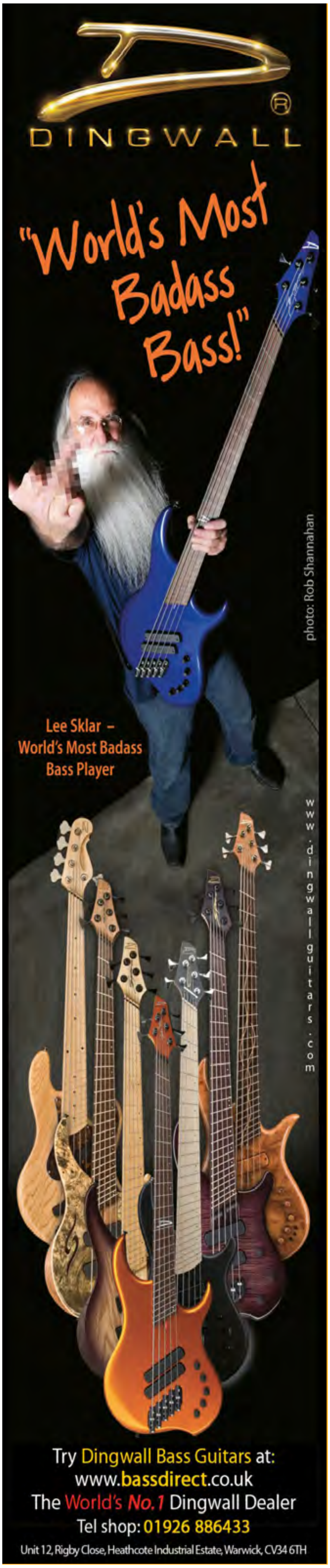
VICTOR BAILEY RIP

Mike Brooks writes: In a year that has seen the passing of far too many musical luminaries, *BGM* was particularly saddened to hear of the death of Victor Bailey at the age of 56, following a long struggle with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease. Also known as chronic muscle fatigue or muscular dystrophy, this debilitating genetic condition had previously affected Bailey's father.

Coming from a musical background and graduating from Berklee in the early 80s, Bailey was the man chosen to fill Jaco Pastorius's shoes in Weather Report from 1982 until the band folded in 1987. Not only did Bailey have to fill the chair vacated by arguably the greatest bassist of all time, he was thrust into a band that often seemed likely to implode at any point. Despite this volatility, he appeared on the last four Weather Report albums, usually playing single-coil Jazz Bass variants. Fender later commemorated Bailey's contribution to the bass world by releasing not one but two signature models, a Jazz variant and an electro-acoustic bass, both of which remain consistently popular.

Bailey joined Steps Ahead while Weather Report were on hiatus and after those bands split, he released notable solo albums such as the revered *Bottom's Up* (1989), as well as becoming an elite sideman for hire. He worked with the likes of Andy Summers, Santana, Michael Brecker, Billy Cobham and Lenny White and also built an extensive pop catalogue, backing Mary J Blige, Madonna and Lady Gaga among others.

Bailey retired from playing last year and passed away on 11 November 2016. Always buoyant and full of life, he was an example to us all.



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TAYLOR MADE

Duran Duran's John Taylor and Roger Taylor recently recorded a new song, 'No Rewind', to benefit the New York charity Road Recovery, an organisation which helps young people through creative projects. "Road Recovery offers a safe, drug and alcohol-free place for young people to learn and work, and with professional guidance, introduces them to all aspects of the music business – from songwriting and performance, to the delivery of their music to fans, either live or via recordings," says John. "'No Rewind' is an expression of the real concerns of sober kids."

www.crowdrise.com/NoRewindForCharity

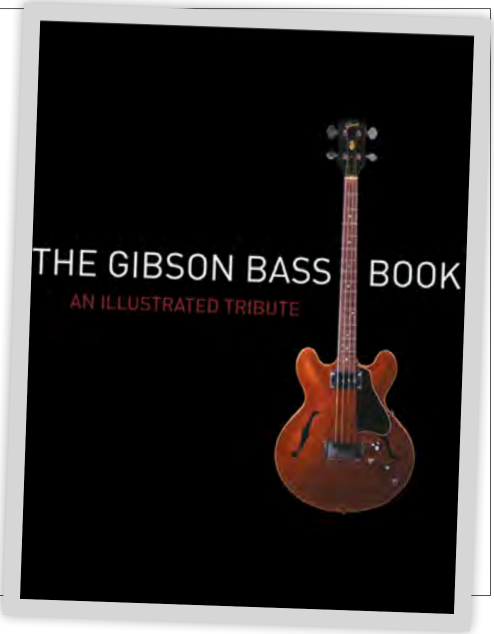
STRAPPED

Seattle-based company ESO has adapted its self-styled 'perfect guitar strap' for bass players. Priced at $59.99, the ESO bass strap features a contoured S shape to avoid pressure on bassists' necks and includes a high-density foam core. Two plectrum pockets, reinforced stitching and hand-crafted Brazilian leather endpieces add much-needed value in the current post-Brexit economic climate.

www.esostrap.com

BASS BOOK

The Gibson Bass Book:* An *Illustrated Tribute is now on sale. Written by Rob van den Broek, a Dutch bass player, the English-language book contains over 400 pictures of 80 different Gibson bass guitars, prototypes, one-offs and custom-shop instruments. "There were books about Fender, Rickenbacker and Guild bass guitars, but no book about Gibson bass guitars," van den Broek tells *BGM*. "This book gives you a good idea of the diversity of bass guitars that Gibson has been building since that first EB in 1953." With 180 full-colour pages and a softcover, the book can be ordered, priced €30, from www.thegibsonbassbook.com.



TON UP

A new G&L model, the Kiloton, was announced recently. Based on the luthier's SB-2 body shape, the new bass features a Magnetic Field Design humbucker, a three-position series/split/parallel toggle switch, a six-bolt neck, alder or swamp ash body wood options, a maple neck with maple or rosewood board, custom G&L 'Ultra-Lite' machine heads, a deluxe hardshell case and a Saddle-Lock bridge. The company promise 'explosive power that's easy to handle', which sounds tasty to us, although it also comes with a wallet-threatening RRP of $2000.

MINI MESA

Many of the features of the Mesa's splendid Subway D-800 head are now available as a gigbag-friendly preamp, UK distributor Westside Distribution inform us. The Subway D-800 DI's features include gain, active bass, low-mid, high-mid and treble EQ controls, voicing control, active/passive instrument select, deep switch, XLR balanced and ¼" unbalanced preamp outputs with ground lift and a balanced direct output with pre/post switch and ground lift. Made in California, the unit has an RRP of £220 and we've got one for review, yay!

www.westsidedistribution.com

REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: Thompson Twins, 'Hold Me Now', 1983

Bassist: Joe Leeway
At 2'48" into this song, a classic 80s toon, Joe Leeway delivers the best bass fill of the entire decade. Really. Go and see it on Youtube. Now, he's playing a Fender in the video, but the bass tone on this splendid 1983 single is in no way, shape or form Fender-esque, so either he was playing something else in the studio or the sound was completely reshaped into a funky, filtered tone that is yet to be equalled in the world of cheesy-but-amazing pop.

BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain.
This month: ACG Recurve FL/3P £1,369
http://tinyurl.com/gqdgegm

Here's an ACG Recurve FL/3P. This beauty boasts a lovely alder body with padauk centre and a gorgeous burl eucalyptus top. It sports a five-piece flame eucalyptus/padauk neck with an acrylic impregnated ebony fingerboard. The partially-lined, fretless fingerboard is a lovely touch. Hardware-wise, it's got Gotoh tuners and a ACG/ Hipshot bridge. On the pickup front, we have (bridge) ACG OWSB, (middle) ACG FB and (neck) ACG SB, with multiple switching options as well as the ability to blend settings via the ACG DFM 3K preamp. The price tag is on the hefty side but hey, you can't take it with you when you go!

SETTING OFF

Keep an eye out for Fender's new Mustang bass, a must for all surf-rock and/or grunge types from the mega-luthiers' new asymmetrical Offset range. With a weeny 30" and versatile pickup options, the new Mustang looks like quite a steed. More details as we have them.
www.fender.com

LUCKY JIM

Sometime Slade bassist and rock legend Jim Lea releases his *Therapy* album on the Wienerworld label this month. It's been out before, but this time the CD has extra tracks and the music appears on vinyl (180g heavyweight stuff, audio fans) for the first time. Of some of the new tracks, Jim explains: "'Misty Morning Light' is a reference to the chilly misty mornings that were anathema to me during my childhood, adulthood and middle age. 'I'll be John, You Be Yoko' was recorded on 24-track tape [and is] an unashamed old-style recording… I hope you enjoy the bonus tracks and it was a little pleasure to have dug them out from the forgotten archives."
www.wienerworld.com

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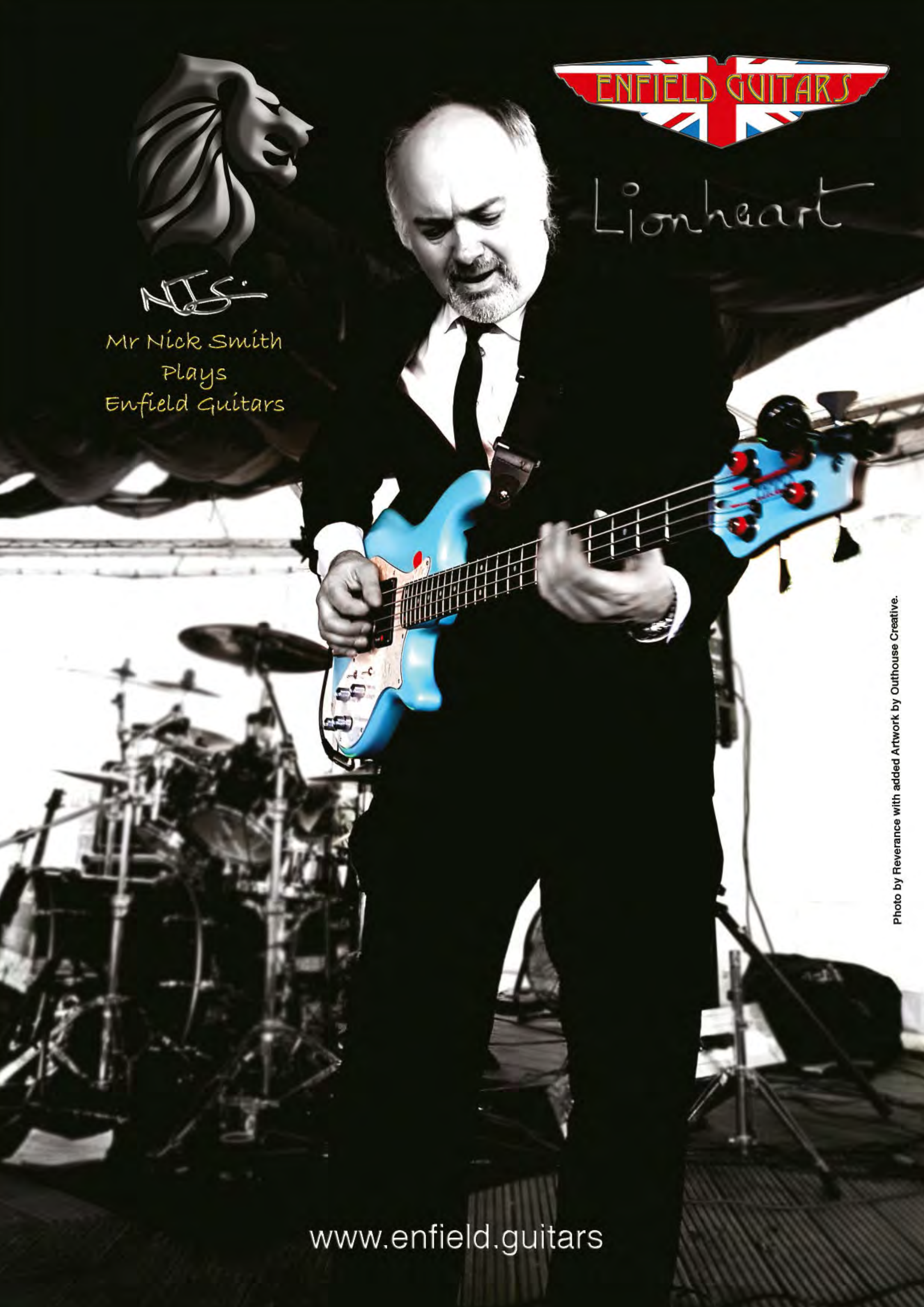
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BASSICALLY SPEAKING

Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string

GEAR

BASSES Epiphone Explorer, Sunn Mustang P-Bass

EFFECTS None

AMPS Orange AD200, Orange cabs

HEATHER MCKAY THE AMORETTES

My first bass was an Alpine White Thunderbird bought when I was 16, customised with stickers of Native American tribal art. I still use it to this day as it sounds incredible and reminds me of being a teenager. My bass style is hard, fast and simple with a little tinge of punk sloppiness: I can get everything I want from four strings. I slap only on special occasions: generally there is no call for it in what we do, but if I'm feeling saucy I sometimes add in a cheeky one. The secret of playing bass well is listening: always listen to other members in your band and follow the vibrations and the groove from the drummer. My favourite bass ever to date is my current P-Bass, a Sunn Mustang from roughly 1989 or '90. I added a big beefy humbucker into it to give it some serious bottom end to work along with the bitey P pickups. My bass heroes are Steve Harris, Kim Deal, Pete Way, Geddy Lee, Norman Watt-Roy, Jim Lea and Roger Waters to name a few. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Bootsy Collins – also the best dressed bass player that ever existed (those platform shoes though...) We've just released our third album, *White Hot Heat*, where we had the chance to work with Luke Morley of Thunder as our producer.

www.theamorettes.com

GEAR

BASSES Dingwall Combustion NG2, Fender American Special P-Bass

EFFECTS Boss TU-2 Tuner, Ibanez PD7 'Phat Head', vintage Boss GE-7B, DBX 166xs Compression

AMPS Hartke HA5500, Ashdown MAG 210T x2.

CHRISTIAN STURGESS BRUTAI

My first bass was a five-string, so I naturally gravitate towards the neck size. Four-strings are great but I like having the option to go lower where needed. I incorporate slap into many segments of our songs, as I find it helps me lock in with more complex rhythmic passages, especially triplet and double thumb techniques. The secret of playing bass well is knowing your place within any given piece of music, but always allowing yourself the freedom to explore the instrument when you practise, giving you the skills to confidently stretch your wings when you can. My first bass was an AXL Tiger Pro five-string, on offer for £400. A fantastic first bass which has seen much love and abuse! My bass heroes? Always a tough question, but it has to be Billy Sheehan, Victor Wooten and Michael Manring. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Jaco, for his contribution to the instrument and opening its secrets to the world. Be the foundation, but never be scared to stretch out and break boundaries. Our debut album *Born* is out now.

www.facebook.com/brutai

GEAR

BASSES Music Man Bongo, Sterling, Stingray
EFFECTS Various TC Electronic, Chellee Odie OD, Darkglass Microtubes B3K, Boss OC-2 octaver
AMPS Ampeg SVT 4Pro with SVT 8x10 cabs

DAVE LARUE FLYING COLORS

I love playing a variety of styles, which is why the Steve Morse Band is such a great gig for me. Steve writes some classical things, some bluegrass tunes, there are complicated odd meter pieces, some straightahead (well, sort of) rock songs, and there are always a lot of challenging lines and parts to learn and a lot of places to improvise. I get to play melodies, chords, solos, there are tapping sections, slapping sections – everything is covered. My own band is similar in a lot of respects, but we also include a lot of material that leans more towards jazz. I play five-string and some six-string because there are musical situations where the low B string or high C is absolutely necessary and adds a lot to the tune. Having the extended range is nice, as well. I'm most comfortable on four, and do a lot of detuning with my Hipshot, but that will never be able to replace a five-string. I slap because it is another essential tool to have in the sonic toolbox. Slapping allows you to change the feel and sound of a groove or a song radically, which, in many cases, can be exactly what is needed to elevate the song to a higher level of intensity. It is another sound we can draw on to add variety to our music, and to have that option to make the best musical choices. How well you play is a reflection of the time you have invested in your instrument, and in music in general. I started out listening to John Paul Jones, Chris Squire and Berry Oakley of the Allman Brothers Band. I was drawn to music that is complicated, where there is a lot of improv, and where the bass has a prominent role. At Berklee, I listened to a lot of jazz greats, such as Paul Chambers, and after that came the era of Stanley Clarke and Jaco Pastorius. I also have to include Victor Wooten, Marcus Miller, Billy Sheehan and Jeff Berlin. I learned a lot from all of those guys. There are many greats I haven't mentioned, so apologies in advance. Flying Colors is releasing a new live DVD/CD any day now. There is some great footage, I hope everyone will check it out.

www.davelarue.com

GEAR

BASSES Gibson Thunderbird, Spector NS-2, BC Rich Beast, Killer Impulse
EFFECTS Aguilar Tone Hammer, Aguilar Chorusaurus, Fulltone Bass-Drive
AMPS Aguilar DB 750 head, Aguilar DB 412 cab

TOSHI OGAWA SHARKS

I would describe my bass style as punk. I'm more like a bass wearer. I do not play five- or six-string bass, because they are wrong. Bass started as a four-string instrument and I'd like to stick with that. Dee Dee Ramone never played five- or six-string bass. They look shite to me as well. I do not slap, because I don't like it. The bands I've been in never required any slap bass, and if you use a Thunderbird bass as low as I wear it, you'd never slap, would you? The secret of playing bass well is having a long strap and playing with the song. My first bass was a Fender Precision. My bass heroes are Dee Dee Ramone, Sid Vicious, Duff McKagan, Nikki Sixx and Paul Simonon. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose my own, on the *Hey! Hello! Too!* album. People always take the piss out of bass players, don't they? They are all ignorant ****s... Sharks will go to Japan in January 2017 and our new album *Killers Of The Deep* comes out then too.

www.facebook.com/Sharks-band

GEAR

BASSES Fender Precision Deluxe, Geddy Lee Signature Fender Jazz, Mono Gig Bags

EFFECTS Darkglass Microtubes B7K, TC Electronic HOF Mini, TC Electronic Corona Mini Chorus, TC Electronic Polytune 2 Noir

AMPS Various

LEE JENKINS TYRANNOSAURUS NEBULOUS

My bass style changes depending on the band I'm playing with. My current band Tyrannosaurus Nebulous has two guitarists in the mould of Scott Gorham and Brian Robertson, so my bass playing needs to be solid while adding the odd flash of melody. I'm still coming to grips with fully understanding a four-string bass: the music I play doesn't need the extra depth of a five-string. I've yet to learn how to slap at a level I'm happy with. I'd love to find use of it in my band's music. One bass player that provides a blueprint on how to do it in rock and metal is Arif Mirabdolbaghi of Protest The Hero. Listen to 'Hair Trigger' from their album *Scurrilous*. The secret of playing bass well is a combination of factors. Self-motivation, a good practice schedule to a metronome, a good understanding of the fundamentals of musical theory and honest self-criticism: deep down, we all know where our own shortcomings are on the bass. Studying with a good music teacher will help to speed up the process of learning. My first bass was a Marlin I bought from a pawn shop in Richmond Road, Cardiff. The neck was so bent it could have been used as a bow for an arrow! My parents took pity on me that Christmas and bought me a Squier Precision which I still have in my collection.

I met Stu Hamm at a bass convention in Manchester around six years ago and complimented his playing on Steve Vai's track 'For The Love Of God': understandably, he didn't take it particularly well. Luckily Billy Sheehan was there, who actually did play on the track. Mr Sheehan based part of his masterclass later that day on that particular song, which I'm sure was no coincidence. At the time it was embarrassing; in hindsight, it's kind of funny. My band Tyrannosaurus Nebulous have just released our new EP, *Deal With My Evil*: four tracks of monstrous classic British hard rock.

www.tnebulous.com

MICHAEL BAILEY BAD TOUCH

I would describe my bass playing as a hard-hitting heavy metal style but within a classic rock/blues-rock band. I tend to use quite an overdriven tone, and a heavy right hand, but I know when to scale it back to fit into the softer, more laid-back songs. My playing varies a lot, from playing the same as the guitars, or something completely different, to just locking in with the drums, or if any of that fails, playing nothing but the root note while the guitars play a cool riff. I mostly only play five-string basses now: I love the little bit of extra low end room that I have compared to a four-string. I like to add that little bit of heaviness to our sound, so if there's ever a D-based riff, or even a B-based riff where the guitars are playing up high, I like the option of playing the same or even lower. My first bass was a Squier Bronco three-quarter length bass. At the time I was looking to buy a guitar, but then my mate said he was selling his bass, so I thought, 'Why not?' I didn't even have an amp or a tuner for almost a year, but I still loved playing it. It didn't take long before I upgraded and got a Westfield copy of a Warwick Thumb, which I've still got. My favourite bass ever is my Warwick Corvette Standard. There is just something about Warwicks that are so comfortable to play. Out of any basses I've played, both of my Corvettes just feel the nicest to play. Plus they also sound and look great too. The greatest bass player that ever lived is possibly Steve Harris of Iron Maiden. Not only is he one of the biggest influences in my playing, he's also one of the main songwriters in my favourite band. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would probably choose *Paranoid* by Black Sabbath. The sound on that album is just so dirty that I love it. I just love the sound of a naturally overdriven bass through a cranked valve amp.

www.badtouchrocks.co.uk

© Ritchie Birnie

GEAR

BASSES Warwick Corvette

EFFECTS Sansamp, Boss ODB-3 bass overdrive, Morley Bass Wah

AMPS Ampeg SVT CL, Ampeg 6x10 cab

The revenge of all those trees that fell in the forest but were never heard
Model Shown: Euro 6LX Black Flame
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GEAR
BASSES Yamaha BB, Fender Precision
EFFECTS Samson wireless units, Ampeg SVT Mic Preamp DI, Countryman DI, Tech 21 Sansamp Bass RBI, Xotic Effects BB Bass Pedal
AMPS Ampeg SVT Classic, Ampeg 4x10 Cabinet

ROBBY TAKAC GOO GOO DOLLS

Basses are meant to have four strings in my world, although I do use the bottom four strings of a five-string set quite often. Slap has never found a place in the things we do, but I like watching someone do it, kinda like watching someone do wheelies on a motorcycle, I guess. The secret of playing bass well is staying in your zone and having an intimate musical dialogue with your drummer's kick drum foot. My favourite bass ever is split between my 1982 orange Fender Precision and a 70s black Precision we all call Daisy. My bass heroes are Steve Harris, Dee Dee Ramone, Lemmy… and Billy Sheehan was from my hometown of Buffalo, NY so I always looked up to him. I've been watching his career since I first saw him play when I was a kid. The greatest bass player that ever lived? Yikes… not me. John Entwistle always had an amazing tone, one of the first bass players to be right up front and still completely hold down the bottom end. My first GGDs tour was done in 1986 with an 18" JBL speaker mounted in the back of an old 2x15 Fender cabinet, and I only used bass strings handed down from Gang Green's bassist Joe Gittleman from the previous night's show. We've just released our eleventh studio album *Boxes* and are headed out to begin a world tour that will take us well into 2017.
www.googoodolls.com

GEAR
BASSES Gibson Grabber
EFFECTS MXR DI+
AMPS Ashdown EVO II 500 and 8x10 cabs

GORDON MOAKES YOUNG LEGIONNAIRE

I do not play five- or six-string basses. I think they look like shit and don't sound much better. I prefer the low end that comes from a four string, and I even like how the open notes have a tendency to slide a little flat when you tune down. It's heavy. I have played a bass VI before though, and I have a real soft spot for my Eastwood Sidejack Baritone. I do not slap, because I'm a nice guy, I don't believe in violence. My first bass was a Squier P-Bass. It was pretty bad but a lot of the early Bloc Party stuff (my previous band) was written on it. I've played a few P-Basses that I love – my favourites were always Mexican ones. My main choice now is a Gibson Grabber. I have two and I think they're all pretty solid-sounding. In terms of feel and attitude, I'd have a hard time picking someone more inspirational to my playing than Mani from the Stone Roses. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Converge's *Axe To Fall*. Nate Newton's tone is so heavy but also really precise and sharp. It always sounds really in tune despite the low tuning, and it makes those kind of riffs that move across close semitones a lot more powerful. In my opinion, Kurt Ballou is the best producer of rock low end full stop. It's not what you play, it's about what you don't play. Young Legionnaire's album, *Zero Worship* is out now.
www.younglegionnaire.com

THE LUTHIER

Ace luthier Doug Mullen of Eve Guitars talks the body talk

In this column we've spent a considerable amount of time considering the structural, theory and material aspects of what an instrument is composed of, its process of construction and composition. Before we move onto the physical aspects of the build itself, there is one last issue that we need to address which is often overlooked and widely misunderstood – the physical body shape.

If we're honest, the first thing we fall in love with is the shape of the instrument. Apart from the design of the headstock and the defined neck dimensions, the body is the most visual part of the bass. How many of us put up with an uncomfortable body shape because it looks cool? Do we favour aesthetics over functionality? Do you really want to end up with neck and back problems due to an uncomfortable playing position due to design – is it worth it?

From a pragmatic design standpoint, it's one of the things we luthiers take seriously when designing our instrument shapes. As we've discussed, different species of woods are wildly variant in their structural composition, which result in particular weight and tonal characteristics. Like a well-fitting suit, we should be able to tailor the instrument that suits our body best, whether in a sitting or standing position.

In the early days of Eve Guitars, we had an obsession with lightweight bodies designed for comfort, tone, and longevity of use in a playing scenario. We were taken aback a few times at trade shows where some individuals stated they preferred heavier, thicker instruments so that they could 'feel' they had something more substantial on their body. So, as a customer-based company, we altered our offerings on a custom-to-custom level while retaining our signature design language. Tactile feedback is important as a player, and also as a builder: go with your gut feeling if something feels natural. This will go a long way to avoiding 'buyer's remorse'.

The renowned graphic designer Milton Glaser once stated: "Design is the process of going from an existing condition to a preferred one. It's good to understand that design has a purpose, and art has another purpose – design's efficacy is measured by how well it delivers on a client's goal." There is a clear distinction between function and aesthetic: ideally the two are not mutually exclusive, but function over form should be the first consideration in good design from an ergonomic perspective. The function of an instrument is to be played: everything else is immaterial unless this first principle is observed.

While we could get into the semantics of design versus art and function versus form, it's my experience that simplicity and honesty are the best goals to aim for. Balance, weight and body ergonomics are paramount in the first instance: everything else must and should be secondary. Just look at your bass: a relatively small body mass, a long neck with four, five or six metal tuners bookending the instrument. There is a reason why the extended upper horn has to balance the weight distribution, ideally as close to the middle of the scale of the instrument at the 12th fret. After this, body cutaways are suited to this playing position – and they must be designed in that order. Or you can look forward to being uncomfortable. The choice is yours.

info@evebass.com

APPLIED IMPROVISATION WITH

ROCKSCHOOL

Walk, don't run, over 'Giant Steps' says Rockschool's Joe Hubbard

John Coltrane's 'Giant Steps' is without a doubt one of the most challenging harmonic progressions to play over with authority and cohesiveness. In the late 50s, Coltrane was experimenting with different harmonic substitutions while studying the Schillinger System of Composition. It was there that he discovered the Three Tonics System of Harmony and wrote 'Giant Steps' based around this theory.

The first four bars of 'Giant Steps' are made up of a series of V7 to Imaj7 chords moving down the cycle of major 3rds. This creates a perfect symmetrical harmonic progression, dividing the octave in three equal parts. One of the biggest challenges with 'Giant Steps' is that the harmonic rhythm of the chords lasts for only two beats. Coupled with the speed at which many jazz musicians play this tune, this creates further obstacles while attempting to create fluid lines that contain a melodic flow.

Many players avoid working on 'Giant Steps' because if you attempt to blag your way through the changes, it simply doesn't work. I personally avoided this tune for many years until I finally realised that Coltrane himself practised this progression for years before unleashing it on the world. The methodology that he used was writing out countless choruses of lines and then learning those specific lines in every key, until he could feel and breathe every essence of this progression without conscious thought.

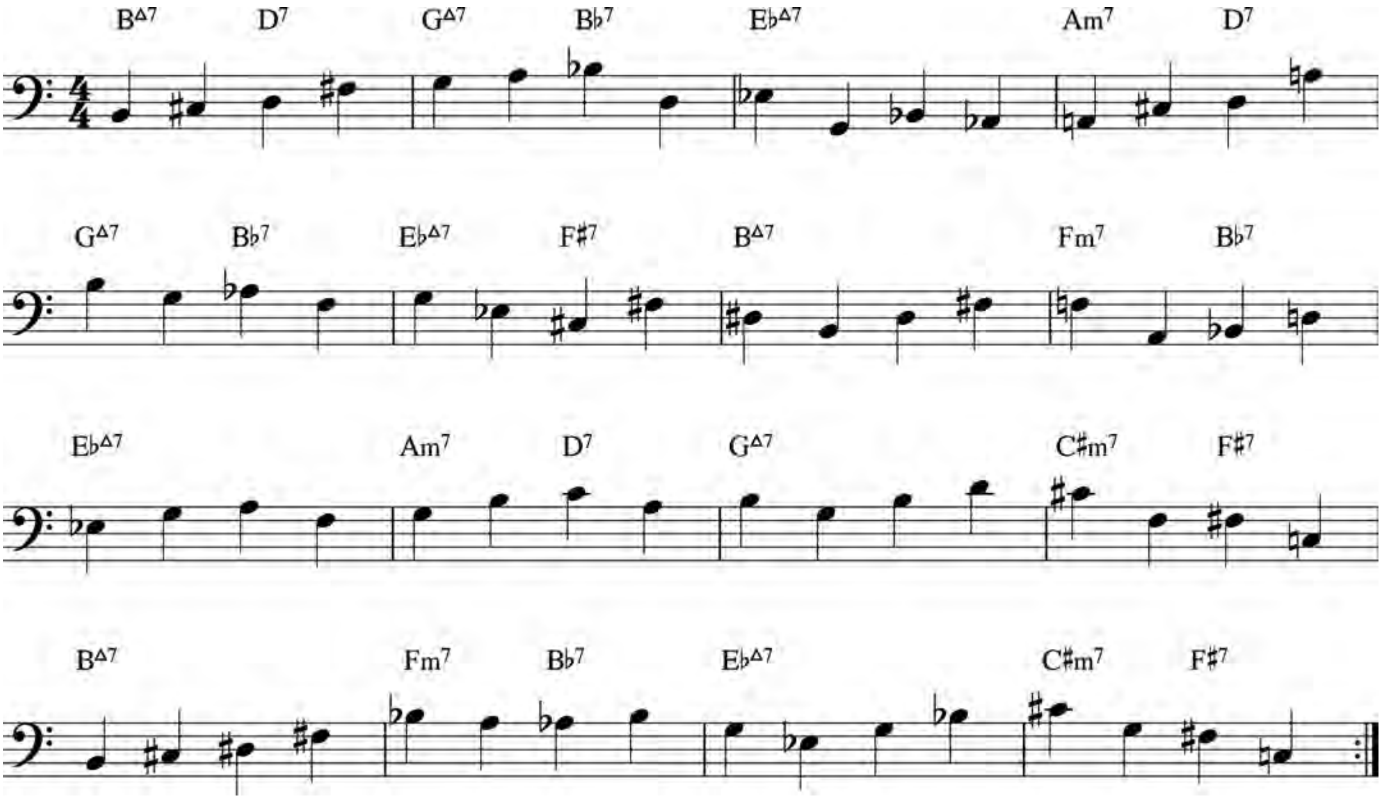
When learning to construct a walking bass-line over this progression, what's important is to be cognisant about the melodic outline of your line. You see, many people approach playing walking lines in the same manner as 'connecting the dots' or 'painting by numbers' with no awareness of what the melodic outcome sounds like. We should remind ourselves from time to time that music is an auditory experience, and your musical choices that you make while playing anything (walking or soloing) should reflect that.

It's a good idea to break this tune into two eight-bar sections. The first four bars of the chord progression is Bmaj7, D7, Gmaj7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, followed by A-7 to D7, setting up the next four bars, which repeats the same sequence starting on Gmaj7. The major 7th chords identify the keys (notice Bmaj7, Gmaj7, Ebmaj7 moving down in major 3rds). The dominant 7th chords that precede each major 7th chord are the related V7 chords of the key they're moving towards. The intervallic formula would be up a min3rd, up a 4th, up a min3rd, up a 4th.

The next eight bars are slightly easier because the harmonic rhythm lasts for four beats over four different chords. A good way to look at this is to notice the intervallic pivot points between each major 7th chord and the following II-7 V7 progression. Notice that the links between these are a tritone interval. Once it works its way back to Ebmaj7, the II-7 V7 taking us back to the top of the tune is a major 2nd down from the Ebmaj7 chord.

Study the accompanying walking lines and learn them in every key. It's hard work, but you will see and hear yourself improving exponentially as a result.

EXAMPLE 1



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THE MU

Sell your treasured bass gear with care, say the Musicians' Union

It's something that most musicians will have to do at some point during their careers. Whether you want to upgrade your equipment, change your sound or just free up a little more space, being able to negotiate the often fraught process of selling your instrument is an under-appreciated skill that is well worth acquiring. But what is the best way to go about it?

Finding a place to sell
Identifying the best places to sell your gear online is fairly easy. Musical instruments – particularly lower-priced items – crop up regularly on eBay and Gumtree. However, both come with a warning. eBay's fee structure has recently changed, and perhaps most significantly, the company has abolished the £40 upper limit on its final value fee, meaning it might be less of a bargain than it once was.

You should also try looking at dedicated forums for your chosen instrument. These include a facility to insert small ads in return for a small fee that gives you access to their classifieds for a whole year – considerably less than the commission now charged by eBay. This way, you'll get directly to a host of customers. Quite often the final deal will be done in person. That's the good side. The downside is that occasionally you'll come across time-wasters who just want a go on your guitar. Of greater concern is when something goes wrong with a sale – so make sure you know the instrument inside out before you sell.

How to list it
Write a proper description of the item you are selling. Ask yourself 'What might the buyer want to know about the instrument?' and write enthusiastically but specifically. Be clear about what kind of condition it is in, and honest. If it's got scratches or marks, mention them: not doing so could put your reputation as a seller at risk. Take photographs and show the instrument from every angle. Make sure they are as high quality as possible, well-lit and in a good setting. Finally, price it fairly. If you're unable to get it properly valued, do your research and look around at similar items to try and discern what would most likely be a fair price for your instrument. Ask what makes and models like yours are fetching.

For more valuable instruments, it is advisable to get a valuation and make contact with a dealer face to face. One option is to sell to that dealer there and then, which, in many cases, you could do in return for a commission fee. However, these usually start around the 20 per cent mark, and there is no guarantee that your instrument will sell. Another solution – if your instrument is worth four figures – is to go to an auction house. Great if you have something of value, but still look out for those pesky commission fees.

Of course, whatever the price you're looking for, you are always going to come across chancers who'll ask you to drop the price. The online world can be hazardous, so look out for suspicious deals or anything too good to be true.

Exchanging
Finally, you're able to exchange the instrument for a cheque or bank transfer and the sale is complete. Be prompt in dispatching your instrument and pack it well. If you're selling online, remember to leave feedback, thereby preserving (and maybe enhancing) your reputation as a seller. It's okay to ask for feedback in turn. Even if you're not a wheeler-dealer type, the chances are that – whether buying or selling – at some point you'll need to dive back into the world of instrument trading once more...

BASSCHAT

Say no to gigging, with Silvia Bluejay of Basschat

The majority of Basschatters are committed giggers at a variety of levels. However, there are also quite a number who don't play in public at all, but still practise, and strive to become a better bassist, every day. They are the subject of a recent, long-running thread which attempts to shed light on the mysterious art of enjoying bass playing without standing in front of a crowd with your back to a powerful stack making your clothes flap.

We have discovered that performing in public is a less-than-universally shared passion within our community, and that non-giggers have as many good reasons to shun the limelight as giggers have to pursue it. Some non-gigging Basschatters do get together with other musicians, but don't play for a live audience: others choose to sit at home on their own, playing along to their favourite records, or making music with the help of computers.

There may be practical reasons to avoid gigging. Some bassists are simply too shy to actually play in public; beginners may choose to wait until they become confident enough to join a band; bassists who don't drive or can't afford their own transport may decide that having to depend on bandmates for rehearsals and gigs is just not worth the aggravation. On the other hand, many Basschatters would love to gig, but are prevented from joining a band and/or setting aside rehearsing time by irregular work patterns, debilitating health problems, or having to care for a sick relative.

The replies to that thread also revealed some less obvious reasons for Basschatters choosing not to leave their bedrooms. Forget appreciating all kinds of music – some of us are only prepared to play the songs we like, and would hate to listen to repeatedly, and learn to play properly, those we dislike. That doesn't bode well for joining a band. Speaking of bands, those hotbeds of conflict and enforced compromise, many Basschatters can't stand being in one: they refuse to deal with rampant egos, frustrating disorganisation, and personality clashes, and prefer to enjoy music on their own. That may mean prolifically composing, arranging, recording on PC or Mac, and publishing the results online, so it doesn't need to be a purely intellectual pursuit – although we all agree that there is nothing wrong with that either. Or we may dislike having to deal with an audience who, more often than not, may be uninterested, disrespectful or hostile. Some bassists only do session work, and enjoy interacting with other musicians in the studio; others are in bands who just have fun rehearsing without ever gigging.

Basschat's resident fast food blogger and expert gigger, Les, points out that there is, however, one thing that non-giggers definitely, and sadly, miss out on: they will never know the joys of a late night, post-gig kebab meal shared with the band, and their life as musicians will therefore never be complete. That aside, there's no split between giggers and non-giggers: whether on stage, in the studio, in the pit or at home, we are united by the love of music in general and of bass in particular. Oh, and also by Gear Acquisition Syndrome.

Not gigging doesn't imply not buying nice instruments or accessories, if you can afford them – you may simply have to admit that you 'want' them, rather than saying you 'need' them. That's never stopped anyone from hitting our Marketplace, anyway!

www.basschat.co.uk

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FAR HORIZONS

Matt Kean and his band Bring Me The Horizon have spent the last decade rising up the ranks from clubs to sold-out stadiums. "I don't even know any theory!" he tells Joel McIver

Pictures: Olly Curtis

Heavy metal is an ever-changing beast, as the headbangers among you will know. Depending on your age, you'll recall metal either as a British creation associated with a rebellious lifestyle and mullet hairdos, or as a largely American phenomenon beloved of everyone from jocks to accountants. The latter is the case these days, making it all the more surprising that one of the biggest bands to step up to the metal plate in recent years comes from Sheffield.

Bring Me The Horizon have described an interesting trajectory since they first entered the public eye a decade ago. The band – currently singer Oliver Sykes, guitarist Lee Malia, keyboardist Jordan Fish, bassist Matt Kean and drummer Matt Nicholls – began their careers playing deathcore, an anthemic form of extreme metal loaded with breakdowns and Sykes' shredded-larynx shrieks. Tricky to play whatever your instrument, but particularly on bass given the genre's preference for low tunings and gargantuan string gauges, the music was complex and difficult to digest (depending on your perspective).

However, the years have passed and BMTH (who got their name from the line "Bring me that horizon" in a *Pirates Of The Caribbean* film) are playing slower, simpler, more anthemic music that has gained them a new, wider fanbase and concomitantly greater degrees of success. At this point, they're massive: when *BGM* catches up with bassist Matt Kean, it's backstage at the O2 Arena in London, which has been long sold out to hordes of screaming teenagers.

Kean settles on the sofa in a luxurious backstage room, confiding in us that he normally declines interview requests because he doesn't like answering the usual questions. The fact that we're all about the bass must have persuaded him to say yes this time, then: either that, or it's our natural, unaffected charm. Take it away...

Matt, selling out the O2 Arena must feel like a huge achievement?

It's pretty crazy, because we only started this band as something to do. Some of us were at college, I was on the dole. I didn't have much else to do, and where we grew up, there weren't many options available to people. We wanted to get out there and see the country, so we started out touring in cars: we'd load our stuff up because someone had promised us a gig in a pub in Hartlepool or somewhere. It progressed from there.

How did you get into bass?

When I was growing up I always wanted to be a footballer, but I eventually got it into my head that that was never going to happen. All my mates were finishing school and going off to college or getting jobs, so I went to college too, but it was only two days a week, doing biology, physics and chemistry A Levels. All my mates were busy on the three days off a week that I had, and I realised that I was going to lose touch with them. I wondered what to do apart from play on the computer all the time, so I went out and got a bass on layaway.

What was it?

It was a Peavey starter pack with a combo, which was all right for what it cost, and anyway it was all that we could afford, so it was cool. I spent all day upstairs playing it. I used to print all the tabs off the internet and take them up to my room and then play along with my favourite CDs. It was all easy stuff to begin with, like Blink-182 and Green Day,

"We put everything into this band, all of us"

anything mainstream that was easy to play. I would go over and over those tabs.

The picking speed in Bring Me The Horizon's early music was demanding. How did you develop your technique so fast?
I just went with it, to be honest. Lee Malia and our original guitarist Curtis Ward were crazy guitarists: I went to see them in their band before ours, which was a bit like a Metallica tribute band, and I thought they were amazing. They'd only been playing a year and they were so far beyond me, but I caught up. I never had any lessons or anything, I just had my own style, so I've probably got really bad technique. I don't even know any theory or anything. I've never really delved into that side of it, but they'd play a riff and I'd watch how they played it, and go away and learn it.

So is the secret simply practice?
Yes, I would say so, but also you have to play music you enjoy. Any song that I listened to and I liked, I played. If you listen to music that you don't like, you probably don't have that ambition to learn it. So whatever you're into, even if it's not ultimately what you want to be playing, go with that. You'll have more fun that way.

What else do you need to make a band work?
You really need focus. I finished college when we were starting out, and I was on the dole for a year. During that time, there was a course that you could do if you were into music, where I would go to Red Tape Studios in Sheffield and they'd teach you about recording and stuff like that. I did that a few days a week, and we'd practise and then do shows at the weekend. That was all we did. We put everything into the band, all of us. I was in bands before and I'd turn up to practice, and the drummer wouldn't be there, or someone would call and say they couldn't make it, but with us, when we first started we were like, 'When are we doing the practice?' and we were totally into it.

When did BMTH become a full-time thing?
Quite early on, because when we weren't touring we'd just hang out together. We didn't have any money, but we didn't care. Any money we had, we put into touring, and if we got paid petrol money it was fine by us. We didn't need any money to survive, because if we weren't touring we'd just be at home playing music and talking about music. We were lazy bums, which is probably not a good example to set, now I come to think of it!

What basses did you play as time passed?
When we first started, it was all about how much the basses cost, so after that Peavey I bought a really cheap Ibanez. It was my only bass at that point, so once we started touring and getting noticed, Ibanez gave us a discount on a lot of their models and I used their four-strings for a while. I had five-strings too, but I didn't use them much: I

"I never idolised anyone, but I definitely appreciate it when I see a bass player who's good."

was more into them because of the string gauge, because we played pretty low: the first album was in drop A. As we progressed I bought a few Fenders, and Sandberg gave me a discount as well. It was really hard to get an endorsement, but I've finally got one now through Gibson. I've been playing them for four years.

How many basses do you tour with?
I bring four on tour: I use the EB model as well. I have the action quite high by choice, because the gauges are so big on the lower strings. They're Ernie Balls: they didn't use to make the gauge that we needed, but then they ended up making a custom gauge for us. My lowest string is a .145, and they didn't make them before that, but I think they sell them now because we requested them. I guess heavier music has started getting more popular.

Do you bring an amp out with you?
Yes, an Ampeg SVT-VR reissue. I was using a Classic, and the first time we used a VR it was a rental one in Australia. It sounded better than my other one, and a bit warmer.

Any effects?
No effects, I keep it simple. On the newest album I do use an Empress compressor, though. It has a line in, and we've got it hooked up so that it's triggered by the bass drum, and it cuts out on one of the songs. I don't think anyone else does that. It's the song 'Oh No', which is a bit dancey, so it has the bass drum all the way through it. The bass goes along with the bass drum, and cuts out. That's the pedal's only purpose, for that one song. We wrote the song like that and didn't really think about how we were going to do it live. In the studio it's easy to do, but quite difficult to replicate live. I was searching for a way to do it, and found this pedal, and we played it like that.

What do you do if the compressor goes down?
Panic! No, we have a spare. It would sound similar without it anyway.

How do you write your bass parts?
I mostly lock in with the guitar riffs. That's what I've always done, especially with the older songs, where the easiest way was just to follow what Lee was doing. My tone is a little bit more aggressive live than it is on the CD, because I need it to cut through a little bit, which I do with the EQs. When we were recording the older albums, we normally recorded the drums, then all the guitars and then move onto bass: I would be last, sometimes even after the vocals, so I'd be looking at the clock, thinking 'I don't want to cost the band too much.' Nowadays we do the albums song by song, so everyone's always doing something.

Who are your bass heroes?
I never idolised anyone, but I definitely appreciate it when I see a bass player who's good. For me, it was always just about being in a band. I never wanted to be a particular person.

How has your bass playing changed over time?
When we first started out, we used to think 'This riff has to be super technical!' but as we've got older we've learned to relax into the song a little bit more. You think about the song, rather than your part and how crazy technical it is. It's harder to make a song really tasteful and not take away from it. Obviously the guy from the Red Hot Chili Peppers can play like crazy, but he doesn't go into a Victor Wooten style, does he? That's a really hard thing to do.

Your latest album, *That's The Spirit*, is much mellower than previous ones. Does that have an impact on your bass playing?
You have to play a bit more tastefully: you can't be whacking it too hard like we did on the older songs. It's fun to play in different ways, especially live. As the set goes along, there's aggressive songs and there's mellow ones as well. And I'm getting old now, so I can sit into the mellow ones a bit.

Do you have any ambitions to fulfil?
At the start, we just wanted to play gigs. Just the fact that we've made it to this point is a surprise. If you'd been interviewing me the day we played Wembley, it would have been the same: we never reached for anything, we just concentrated on what we were doing right now, and I think that's the best way to do it. We've never been disappointed with how everything's gone, because we never expected anything!

But you must have pinch-yourself moments.
Oh yes, that often happens, usually afterwards. I'll get home after a week on tour and think, 'That was crazy…'

Bring Me The Horizon's *Live At The Royal Albert Hall* is out now on Sony. Info: www.bmthofficial.com.

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Gear Of The Year 2016

It's been another bumper year for bass players, with amp technology improving all the time and killer new basses on the racks. Mike Brooks brings you the very best of the best

Welcome to *BGM*'s look back at the Gear Of The Year – and what a year it's been! It's flown by, with new gear being launched at a rapid rate throughout the year. Small, lightweight amps and back-friendly cabinets continue to appear at breakneck pace, while fanned-fret instruments are making serious strides and becoming more common among the playing community, although the perennial favourites still maintain high visibility.

Obviously we don't have space to feature every single new item of bass kit that's appeared this year, so here's a roundup of the essential new additions. Each piece of kit is rated for build quality (can it handle being gigged constantly, or will it fall to bits the day after the warranty expires?), sound quality (does a bass have tonal flexibility, does the amp or cab have the ability to shake a building to its foundations, is the pedal producing sonic flavours that you simply can't do without?) and relative value for money (is the product punching above its weight, and is it putting similar or more expensive products to shame?).

Although the majority of items here have been reviewed by us, there are a few exceptions where we either haven't received one for review or simply haven't had space over the year to include it in our review section (yet!). We have four price ranges for fretted basses, so that the winner in each category is rated against similarly priced instruments, plus categories for fretless and acoustic basses, amp heads, cabs, combos, effects and bass accessories. Note that the items in positions two to five in a given category are not rated in a position format – so an item rated second isn't necessarily any better than an item rated fifth. Oh, and we shouldn't need to point it out, but inclusions here are not beholden to advertisers, musicians, distributors, manufacturers or anyone else. We take the independence of our ratings very seriously.

Note that the RRPs we quote have taken into account the Brexit effect – so although a bass may have fallen into a particular price category when we reviewed it, it may now be more expensive due to exchange rate fluctuations. All that said, enjoy – and if you think we've missed out a crucial bit of kit this year, let us know!

BEST FRETTED BASS

UNDER £500

Bass Centre Bass Collection Bruce Thomas Profile | £495

A replica of the Attractions' bass lord's own instrument that was stolen sometime in the Eighties, this has been designed with Bruce's own modifications from the bottom up. Enticing playability courtesy of the slimmed-down neck, powerful tones from the custom wound pickup and all the classic features of a Precision.

www.basscentre.com

Chowny CHB-1 | £460

This semi-hollow, Chinese-made, short-scale is a whole lot of bass for the money. Great value.

www.chownybass.com

Revelation RBJ 67 Deluxe | £199

A stunningly capable bass at a pocket-friendly price – what's not to like?

www.revelationguitars.co.uk

Danelectro Longhorn | £529 ▶

(was under £500 at time of review)

A faithful reproduction in all departments of a vintage classic: quirky, different, but playable.

www.jhs.co.uk

Cort C4 Plus OTAB | £399

Featuring a Markbass preamp, Bartolini pickups and organic woody visuals, check it out!

www.proel.co.uk

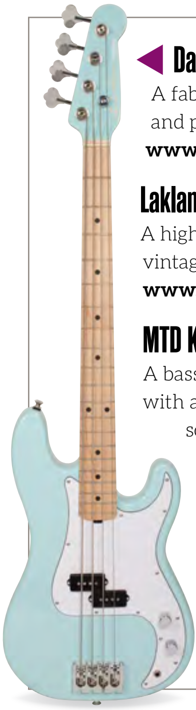
BEST FRETTED BASS

£500 TO £1000

Ibanez SRFF806/BKS 6 | £879

A real winner of a bass in every respect; a comfortable six-string neck, fanned frets, great tone-shaping options and fine visuals. A great package from Ibanez that delivers on all fronts at a price that won't break the bank – and a worthy investment if this is your first excursion into extended range basses.

www.headstockdistribution.co.uk



◀ Dan Lakin Bob Glaub Precision | £999

A fabulous Precision that belies its pricetag and puts others to shame.

www.bassdirect.co.uk

Lakland Skyline Jazz 44-60 | £929 ▶

A high quality take on a familiar favourite: vintage styling, solid, reliable and well-finished.

www.thebassgallery.com

MTD Kingston Super 5 | £799

A bass that punches well above its weight with a pleasing low B string and solid sonic delivery across the whole neck. Wow!

www.bassdirect.co.uk

Fender Flea Jazz | £949

You too can pose in front of the mirror and pretend you're Michael Balzary…

www.fender.com

BEST FRETTED BASS

£1000 TO £2500

Fender Dimension Deluxe V HH | £1450

A standout choice: Fender change their game a little and surprise us with this winner. Plenty of tonal variety, twin humbuckers, and a five-string neck that plays itself. This bass really does have it all, is playable to a fault and comes at a very respectable price too. We'll take two!

www.fender.com

Dingwall Combustion NG2 4 | £1300 ▶

A signature model that stands on its own two feet with great visuals, sound and feel.

www.bassdirect.co.uk

Enfield Avenger II 5 | £1970

A redesigned member of the Enfield flock: why take three basses when you can take one?

www.enfieldguitars.com

◀ Dan Lakin Rick Rosas Jazz | £1399

A great looking, great playing Jazz variant that stands out because it is so good.

www.bassdirect.co.uk

Aria SB-1000RIB | £2199

A reissued classic that sounds as good today as it ever did – a tone machine and no mistake!

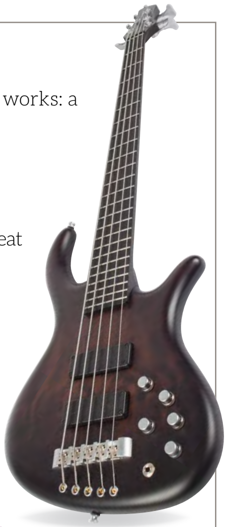
www.ariauk.com

BEST FRETTED BASS
OVER £2500

Dingwall Z3 | £3750
At nearly four grand, this bass isn't cheap – but spend some time in its company and you will appreciate just how good this is. We wouldn't be surprised if you bought this bass and never needed another one.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

BEST FRETLESS BASS

Pedulla Buzz | £3950
A worthy winner and even now, widely considered the ultimate fretless bass tone. Not cheap but in terms of feel, playability, tone and visuals, this is a bass to aspire to and perfectly sums up why Pedulla basses have remained such desirable instruments for so long.
www.bassdirect.co.uk



Rikkers Treeline 5 | £3900
Weird, yes. A lot of money, yes. But strangely it works: a surprising bass on all fronts.
www.rikkersguitars.com

Schack Unique V | £3500 ▶
Massive tonal switching options, well built and great playability with several unique design features.
www.schack-guitars.de

Stonefield 1-5S Slimline | £3800
An interesting instrument in many ways, passive but with 10 different mid-tone settings. Now you're interested!
www.stonefield-musical-instrument-company.myshopify.com

Höfner 60th Anniversary Violin Bass | £6150
Costs a small fortune – but it's an extremely limited-run instrument marking Höfner's anniversary, resplendent with case candy and paraphernalia.
www.bandm.co.uk

Roscoe Century 4STD+ | £2325 ▶
A remarkably comfortable instrument with a tight, punchy, focused fretless tone: a quality instrument.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Anaconda Crusher CXZ5F-Zenith | £3500
Another luscious piece of bass exotica from the Anaconda stable, serious wedge but also serious tone.
www.anacondabasses.co.uk

Marleaux Diva | £3550
A finely crafted German bass with tone to die for and a different, but interesting, visual design.
www.promenademusic.co.uk

NS Design Radius 5 | £2160
A new headless design from the Ned Steinberger drawing board, incorporating magnetic and piezo pickups.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

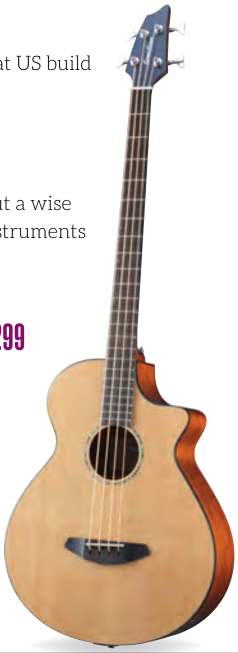
BEST ACOUSTIC BASS

Boulder Creek EBR1-TB5 | £959

An impressive instrument for the price, and a sizeable bass whose dimensions work in its favour and also comes with a fully featured control panel. The dual porting makes for a highly resonant instrument that performs remarkably well. Solidly built and a great acoustic bass whichever way you look at it.
www.bouldercreekguitars.com

Breedlove Solo | £859 ▶

A simple looking instrument, exhibiting great US build quality, superb acoustic tones and controls.
www.rosetti.co.uk



Sigma BME | £315

Quality tones from a cheap imported bass but a wise purchase if you're dabbling with acoustic instruments for the first time.
www.westsidedistribution.co.uk

BSX Bass Allegro Acoustic-Electric | £2299

A bass that you can build yourself! Simple assembly but a rewarding experience with glorious upright tones.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Spector CTB4 | £3150

A quality detour from the norm for Spector, mixing magnetic and piezo pickup tones in a highly playable package.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

BEST AMP HEAD

Mesa Engineering Subway D800 | £879 ▲

We waited long and hard for Mesa's entry into the Class D amp market, but when it arrived, they hit the bullseye with a scorcher of an amp. The Subway D800 was exactly what Mesa fans had hoped for and we were suitably impressed with its design, operation and performance. If you're going to do something, do it well... and Mesa did!
www.westsidedistribution.co.uk

Bergantino BIAMP | £1199 ▶

A very impressive amp from Jim Bergantino, packed to the brim with features and capable of 800 watts.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Genzler Magellan 800 | £602

A return to form for Jeff Genzler, a truly impressive Class D amp that has garnered much interest from fans of his previous amps.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

EBS Reidmar 750 | £699 ▲

The Reidmar 750 puts EBS on a level footing with other super-powered small amps. Exquisite.
www.handinhand.uk.net

Hartke TX600 | £412

Hartke took their time over their Class D amp and came up with another hit – and a pricetag to put a smile on all our faces.
www.korguk.com

BEST CABINET

Aguilar SL410x | £1740

Aguilar's SL range needed a bigger cabinet to complement the perennially successful SL112s, and they truly hit home with this cabinet. Lightweight and portable, tuned perfectly and the answer to many players' prayers, the pricetag is hefty, but for those Aguilar-philes who truly needed this cabinet, the New York company really came up with the goods.
www.bandm.co.uk

Genzler 12-3 | £758

An interesting-looking cabinet that works very well indeed: its innovative design has won many admirers.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Bergantino HDN410 | £1299

A big sound from a well-designed, portable cabinet, blessed with the Bergantino tonal stamp. Well worth checking out.
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Barefaced TWO10 | £519

Pocket friendly, well constructed and a great tonal performance from this UK-built unit.
www.barefacedbass.com

ATS C312x1-T3 | £645

An impressive, Italian-born cabinet that is easily transportable, compact and tonally versatile.
www.bassgear.co.uk

BEST COMBO

Ashdown AAA-60-10T | £199

Another competition-slaying combo from Ashdown: our editor described it as 'light, useful, affordable and easy to use', and who are we to argue? Fully-featured and modifiable using Ashdown's AppTek software – at this sort of price, Ashdown has truly come up with the goods. Nice one, chaps!
www.ashdownmusic.com

Hartke HyDrive HD25 | £149

The HD25 is the perfect amp for home practice sessions; small, perfectly formed with a great tone and useful inputs and outputs.
www.korguk.com

Orange Crush Bass 100 | £369

If you're a fan of the Orange tone, look no further for a combo that delivers on all fronts.
www.orangeamps.com

Schertler Bass Fidelity B15 | £1378

Pricey – but look at the specification and let your ears decide for you. A seriously impressive sounding combo.
www.schertler.com

EBS Magni 500 210 | £799

EBS combos are always worth checking out, and the new Magni range is no exception.
www.handinhand.uk.net

BEST EFFECTS UNIT

Darkglass MicroTubes B7K Ultra | £325▲

A seriously impressive pedal from Darkglass that has impressed players everywhere. Eight rotary controls and four selector switches mean that the tweakers among you can really get down to the nitty-gritty of your equally nitty-gritty tone. Sure, it's pricey but listen to the results.
www.darkglass.com

EBS Billy Sheehan Signature Drive Deluxe | £205

The first upgrade to the original unit from 2013: this deluxe model allows you to switch the distortion chipset, a unique feature.
www.handinhand.uk.net

Two Notes Le Bass Preamp | £249

A fully featured preamp pedal with enough controls to satisfy even the most ardent fiddler.
www.firstlinemusic.co.uk

3 Leaf Audio Wonderlove Deluxe Envelope Filter | £250▲

Envelope filter pedals don't come much better than this. Will it take you to 'higher ground'?
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Electro-Harmonix Bass Clone | £59

Is chorus about to make a comeback? If it is, this pedal should be high on your list of pedals to check out.
www.ehx.com

BEST ACCESSORY

Ashdown B-Social | £599▲

When the B-Social concept was announced, it sounded too good to be true but the guys at Ashdown pulled out all the stops with this unit and in the process have solved home practice issues for every bassist; no cables required (courtesy of Bluetooth), a fine portable music player for the home and an all-round problem-solving unit. The RRP may seem a little steep, but deals can be found to soften the blow.
www.ashdownmusic.com

Babicz Full Contact FCH Bass Bridge | £89-£160▼

A new standard in bass bridges, that are growing in popularity.
www.bassdirect.com

Gruv Gear Fump | £16

Looking for that old-school muted string bass sound? This looks much nicer than a chunk of tatty foam.
www.firstlinedistribution.co.uk

Gallien-Krueger Plex | £290▶

An impressive unit from GK that gives the player full control of their sound in a small, fully featured package.
www.polaraudio.co.uk

Mono Straps | £32-£38

Look after your back and shoulders with these padded straps from the kings of the gigbag.
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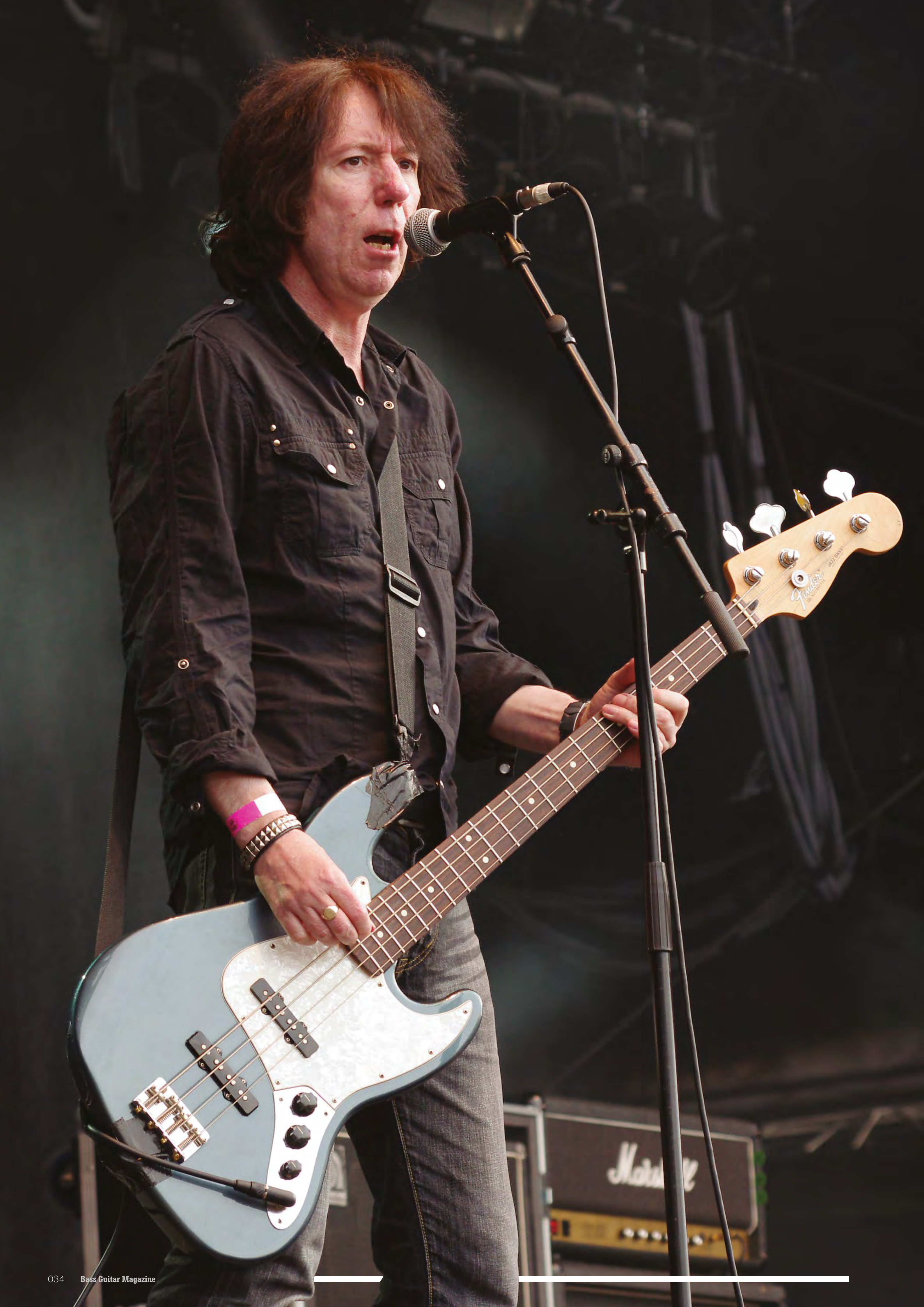

SUBS POP

Alvin Gibbs, sometime bassist with UK Subs and Iggy Pop, talks to Ian Glasper about life as a high priest of punk bass

I began on guitar, but after leaving school I noticed that a lot of semi-professional South London bands were seeking bass players. This was because most rock musicians during that pre-punk period wanted to be either a Jimmy Page-style guitar hero, a swaggering lead singer or a drummer in the theatrical Keith Moon or John Bonham mould. Bass players were considered the runts of the litter: uncharismatic, stationary, shoe-watching types, simply content to provide a solid sonic framework in league with the drummer and devoid of any of the glamour attached to those more prestigious roles. This perception meant there was a deficit of available bassists: I took advantage of that significant fact to switch to bass, and eventually ended up joining a weekend working outfit with which I could earn the then-handsome sum of around £5 a gig playing pubs and social clubs on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

My adjustment wasn't just about economic opportunity. I really liked the effect the bass physically had on the body in a live environment, and the way the instrument meshed together all the other sounds into a solid construct. I also knew, from having watched bassists like Mott The Hoople's Overend Watts, Hawkwind's Lemmy Kilmister and UFO's Pete Way performing on stage, that exponents of the four throbbing wires could be just as cool, stylish and extrovert as any other member of a rock band.

My first professional-grade bass was a Fender Precision, but I guess the instrument I'm most associated with is the Gibson Thunderbird. I played Gibson T-Birds from when I first joined the Subs in 1980 until about six years ago when I switched to, firstly, the standard Fender Jazz and, more recently, the Aerodyne version, of which I own two, both in gloss black with chrome detailing. They have a thinner body and are consequently a lot lighter than the standard Jazz, which if you're doing close to 150 gigs a year, is not a bad thing. Even so, I'm regularly asked at gigs, "Where's

Inspired by his chat with Alvin, Glasper nominates a dirty dozen best of punk rock's best bass-lines...
The whole point of punk was – and is – that anyone can join in and play it. Ability comes a distant second to attitude, and making a statement is infinitely more important than making an impressive chord shape. Yet for a genre never concerned with virtuoso musicianship, punk rock has produced more than its fair share of incredible bass playing, and here, in no particular order, are 12 of its best moments

Some of them come from the traditional punk canon, and some from the more hardcore underground: some of them are technically brilliant, some of them just a blast to listen to. No doubt there's a few punky licks you'll think should be present, and some that you think which shouldn't, but in the true spirit of punk rock, I'll remind you that this is all in the ear of the beholder, and bid you – respectfully, pretty please – to go draft your own list!

'The Regulator' (1982)
Darryl Jenifer, Bad Brains
These guys smashed the Washington DC hardcore scene wide apart, not least of all because they were four black dudes skilfully thrashing the piss out of their instruments in a genre until then stifled by white male dumbinance. Not only did they bring some soulful reggae to the mix, they produced some of the most crazed hardcore the world has ever heard, and bassist Darryl Jenifer's frenzy of immensely powerful chopping downstrokes was the throbbing heart of their fusion of disparate sounds.

'Tomorrow's Girls' (1979)
Paul Slack, UK Subs
Let's face it, if you were a punk in the early 80s and you picked up a bass for the first time, your go-to song to learn was 'Warhead' by the UK Subs – the opening gambit of many an aspiring Sid Vicious – so that's easily their most iconic bass-line. However, 'Tomorrow's Girls' is much more interesting, a teasing runaway of a riff, roaming in and out of Nicky Garrett's point-perfect guitar to shape one of the Subs' catchiest offerings. And they offered a few, believe you me.

'The Only One' (1989)
Harley Flanagan, Cro-Mags
No one in hardcore plays the bass quite like Harley Flanagan. This intense individual, forged in the chaos of the NYHC scene, literally attacks his instrument like his life depends upon it (it often did), bringing his drumming history with the Stimulators to bear in every vicious rhythmic strum. The band's seminal *The Age Of Quarrel* debut (1986) captured Harley at his primal best (check out the bass intro to 'World Peace', if any doubt remains), a classic case of bottled lightning, but by the time of the 1989 follow-up, *Best Wishes*, Harley was also (very ably) handling vocals and picking out this sensitive metallic ode to Krishna.

'Teenage Time Killer' (1981)
Grant Matthews, Rudimentary Peni
The anarcho punk scene spawned many a great four-stringer, not least of all Pete Wright from Crass and Daryl Hardcastle of Omega Tribe, but few were as bonkers or as visionary as Grant Matthews of Rudimentary Peni. Mind you, playing alongside the (quite literally) deranged death punk artist Nick Blinko would inspire anyone to new heights – depths? – of esoteric creativity, and Grant really did explore some dark territories. The first EP, where you'll find 'Teenage Time Killer' and its demented creeping bass intro, was Peni at their most raw and primitive, but Grant's playing helped ensure that their debut LP, *Death Church*, would go down in the history books as an eccentric genre classic, and its follow-up, *Cacophony*, as one of the most off-kilter albums ever recorded.

'Tube Disaster' (1981)
Derek Birkett, Flux Of Pink Indians
This sensitive little ditty, inspired by the Moorgate tube disaster of 1975, appeared on Flux Of Pink Indians' *Neu Smell* EP, the single that created a thousand vegetarians overnight with its cover art and the song, 'Sick Butchers'. But 'Tube Disaster', for all its morbid leanings, is an uplifting tune given a hefty boot up the jacksie by a so-simple-it's-perfect bass intro, which expands into a compelling run-for-the-chorus section. And if you play that chorus run at 100mph you get 'Sea Of Desecration' by Legion Of Parasites, another kick-ass punk bass-line that didn't quite make our top 12. Maybe next time, though. Fact: Derek went on to start One Little Indian Records and launch the career of Björk.

'Holiday In Cambodia' (1980)
Klaus Flouride, Dead Kennedys
The bass rumbles in ominously, and the air is thick with the stench of political intent, a brooding atmosphere of satirical indignation that no-one has quite captured with the same focus as the Kennedys in their heyday. The whole of the band's *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables* debut album is literally crawling with amazing bass moments – and what a wonderful thick tone! – but this slow-burner, astutely picked by Cherry Red as the DKs' second 7", remains their most unforgettable tune, a surf-cool rage against the injustices of Pol Pot's murderous Khmer Rouge, and it's carried into battle by a deceptively simple bass standard.

'Love Song' (1979)
Algy Ward, The Damned
'Hey, man, what's happening?' asks the shouted intro to *Machine Gun Etiquette* (still the Damned's best album by a country mile). What's happening, man, is some of the greatest punk rock ever committed to vinyl, and the effervescent, burbling bass that ushers in the chaos perfectly recalls those salad days of youthful anarchy and the nuclear energy of being a teenager in lust. Before the Damned, Algy had played with the Saints, once they'd relocated to the UK from Brisbane, and afterwards he founded NWOBHM linchpins Tank, but did he record anything quite as potent as 'Love Song' ever again? Did he hell.

'London Calling' (1979)
Paul Simonon, The Clash
Immortalised on the amazing front cover image of the *London Calling* album smashing his guitar up, Paul Simonon was arguably the coolest bassist in punk rock, but then, the Clash were always the coolest band in punk rock as well. Half of the magic of his playing is what – and when – he chooses not to play. And the other half is, well, you know... magic.

'Maxwell Murder' (1995)
Matt Freeman, Rancid
Not content with creating a whole damn genre, ska punk, with Operation Ivy, bassist Matt Freeman then dazzled with his scintillating scales and arpeggios in Rancid. Their third album, *...And Out Come The Wolves*, remains their best work, loaded with gritty pathos. The opening track, 'Maxwell Murder', is arguably Matt's finest moment; he plays out of his skin during the solo.

'Staring At The Rude Boys' (1980)
John Jennings, The Ruts
'Babylon's Burning' is admittedly the one every punk bassist learns first, but if you want a fine example of a floating bass-line that menacingly circles a simple guitar refrain and brings a song to immediate life, look no further than 'Staring At The Rude Boys'. You can cut the atmosphere with a knife.

'Nice 'N' Sleazy' (1978)
Jean Jacques Burnel, Stranglers
Nothing to do with the live video having naked girls in it, and everything to do with JJ Burnel being an absolute bass legend. The third Stranglers album, *Black And White*, has some of the best bass-lines – not to mention one of the best bass tones – of all time, but 'Nice 'N' Sleazy' runs away with the gold. As the title suggests, it's decadent, debauched and deliciously seductive, Burnel's fingers cavorting across the fretboard with a cocksure swagger, and the lilting rhythm building to a crescendo like some frenzied mating ritual... so, nothing to do with the video having naked girls in it. Honest.

'Ain't No Feeble Bastard' (1981)
Roy Wainwright, Discharge
Never before – or since – has one note been played with such utter fury and conviction. And, my God, what a tone: reputably the result of ruined speakers, it's so thick you could choke on it. But Rainy (as he's known round punkier parts) is a deceptively clever player, and not as Neanderthal as some of his work suggests. Just check out the subtle flourishes he throws all over the Discharge material (and you have to listen hard, because there is a wall of impenetrable guitars to contend with). Weaving elaborate fills that don't jar the listener into a song at that speed is the work of a truly relaxed craftsman.

your Thunderbird bass?" I do love the way they look – they are indeed the Cadillac of basses – but the Jazz provides a perfect union of growl and roundness, while T-Birds have more bottom end, resulting in the notes being less distinct. I want audiences to hear my bass playing as well as physically feeling it.

As for favourite basses over the years, the sunburst 1964 T-Bird that I purchased when I first started working with Iggy was a beautiful instrument, while my 1976 matte black version of the same brand of bass proved a real workhorse that I employed both for live and recording work for many years. I sold both to my friend Sammy Yaffa of Hanoi Rocks, the New York Dolls and the Michael Monroe Band just before I relocated from Los Angeles back to London in 1990.

Previously I used Ampeg amps and cabinets, but about six years ago I changed to a Gallien-Krueger RB 700 head 4x10 cabinets. In conjunction with the Aerodyne Jazz, this setup gives me a more aggressive overall sound without dropping any low end. Also, as a spare, neatly stored in my tool case, I carry a Gallien-Krueger MB 200 amp head. It's small and extremely light, but at 200 watts still packs a considerable punch. I don't use any pedals whatsoever: I can obtain sustain and attack via the controls on the RB 700 head.

I started playing bass in the pre-punk period, so I was influenced by John Paul Jones, John Entwistle and Chris Squire. All three of these bassists provided counter-melodies to songs, added impressive runs and travelled around their fretboards with ease, rather than simply pursuing the root notes of a piece of music. This awarded a distinct sense of movement to their playing and, although it's difficult to emulate, was an approach that I absorbed into my own playing. I liked the way Pete Way prowled around the stage with his

"I ALSO KNEW, FROM HAVING WATCHED BASSISTS LIKE MOTT THE HOOPLE'S OVEREND WATTS, HAWKWIND'S LEMMY KILMISTER AND UFO'S PETE WAY PERFORMING ON STAGE, THAT EXPONENTS OF THE FOUR THROBBING WIRES COULD BE JUST AS COOL, STYLISH AND EXTROVERT AS ANY OTHER MEMBER OF A ROCK BAND"

low-slung Gibson Thunderbird bass thrust forward as if brandishing a loaded weapon at the audience. Though more than a competent bassist, it was really Way's stage demeanour that enthused me rather than his actual playing.

I'm very fortunate to make a living by being involved in something I truly love, namely the processes entailed in composing and recording music and playing live to an audience worldwide. I also want to improve as a songwriter and a musical technician. I've been professionally involved in rock music for nearly four decades now but, in truth, I know I'm not yet the bass player or songwriter that I would like to be. I'm still only a lowly student trying his best to follow in the footsteps of the masters of the bass. That knowledge is both a comfort and a provocation to maintain this path for as long as physically possible.

Info: www.uksubs.co.uk

Pic by Ashley Franklin

BANG A GONG

Dave Sturt of Gong recalls his career on the esoteric side of bass

My primary instrument is a fretless Vigier. The fretless sound just grabbed me for some reason, the first time I heard Jaco playing one. Along with many bass players, he truly inspired me. John Entwistle was another one at an early stage. I swapped between fretted and fretless, and I still play fretted from time to time – but fretless is my voice, and the sound that I can relate to best. I feel more comfortable playing it, and it's great to have that melodic vibe that it gives you.

When I first joined Gong, I was expecting them to want me to play fretted, but they loved the sound and look of the fretless. They wanted it to sound really solid, though, so in effect I relearned how to play it really hard. If you play the fretless softly, every note swells, like a brass instrument, whereas if you hit it hard enough that doesn't happen. I was also determined not to be yet another Jaco, but every time I hear him his playing still grabs me. I brushed shoulders with him at a club in New York, where he was playing with Don Alias and Mike Stern.

I learned bass by playing along to the Eagles' *Desperado* album and working out the parts. Herbie Hancock really astonished me too: I realised that he was making it up as he went along, and the fact that you could improvise like that every night bowled me over. It was a long road from that point, but it was thrilling to realise that you don't have to work everything out beforehand, although I was soon on a wonderful journey through the scales and modes. It was amazing.

My first bass was a Fender Precision, which I sold because I really liked the look of a fretted Aria Pro II. The Precision would have been worth a lot now! I also bought a fretless Aria. I'm from near Middlesbrough, so I started up in the north-east, playing with a lot of local bands. It was a fascinating time. At first I used to play too many notes, now I come to think of it: it took me a while to learn to be more supportive.

I moved down to London after taking early redundancy from ICI, where I was an electrician, and the guy in the flat above me was Pink Floyd's sound engineer Andy Jackson. I was practising one of Colin Hodgkinson's solo bass pieces and Andy recognised it, came down and knocked on the door. I got to know him, and through him I got to see a lot of the top recording studios and do some session work. Later, I was doing a session with a band called Strange Advance and they wanted me to find a bass with a different sound to the Aria, so I scoured the music shops and found my two Vigiers.

Daevid Allen [late Gong founder] always wanted us to have freedom in our playing: he was very encouraging to me with my bass playing. On our new album, *Rejoice! I'm Dead!*, some of the bass parts just fell into place under the fingers, but for most of the songs I prefer to develop ideas with the band and respond to what else is going on. I tend to go straight into a laptop and use amp simulators, and I'm also a Markbass endorser. Ableton Live is my effects processor: I play a lot of solo gigs as well, and with the Softstep controller that I use, it sounds incredible. I always hoped that I'd get to the stage where the technology would allow you to do that, and now that it's here, it's fantastic. ■

***Rejoice! I'm Dead!* is out now on Madfish.**
Info: www.planetgong.co.uk, www.davesturt.co.uk.

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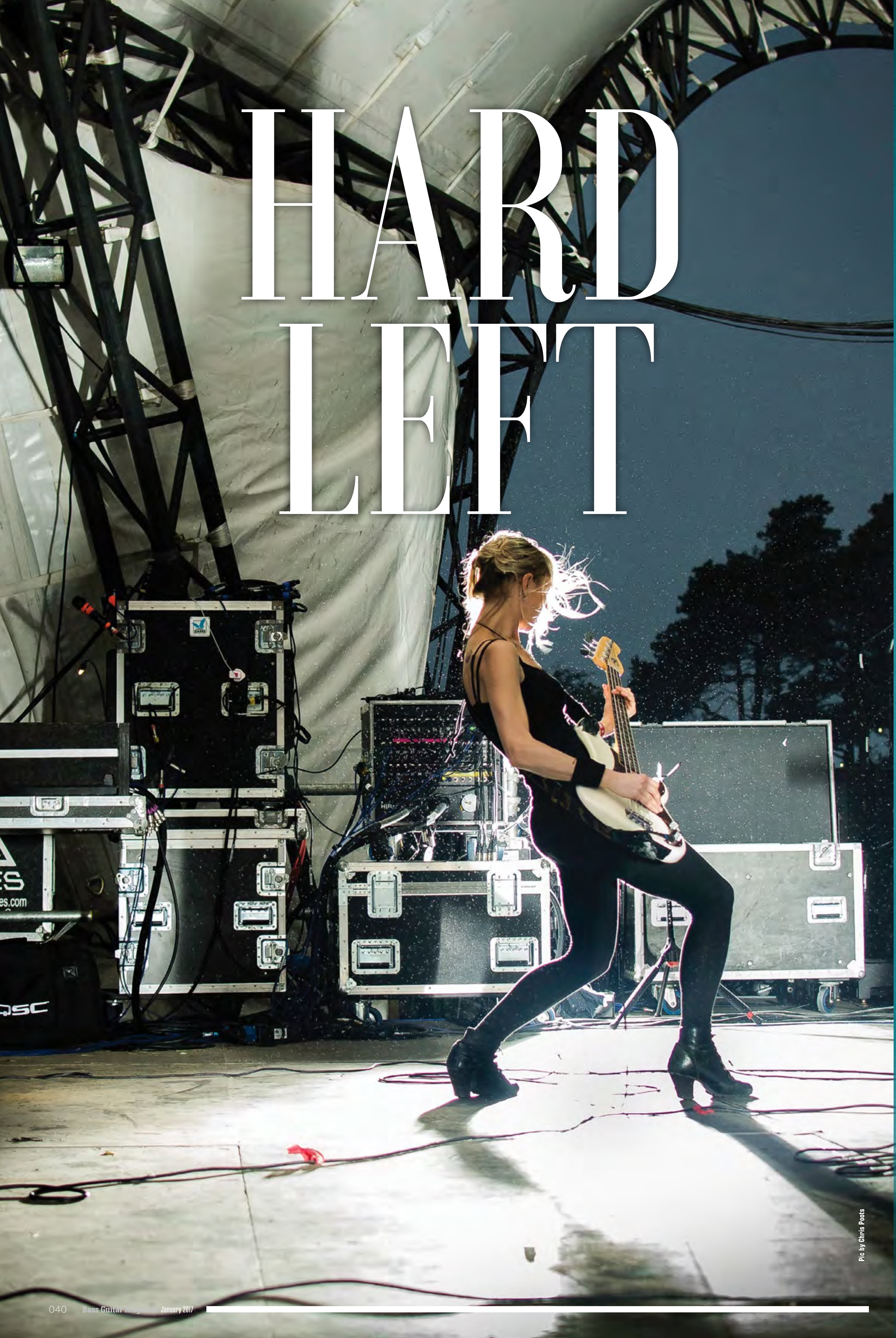

Pic by Chris Poots

As College Principal at BIMM in London, bassist with Future Of The Left and now solo artist, Julia Ruzicka knows more than most of us about life at the low end. Jennifer Otter Bickerdike asks the questions

When I started my new job at BIMM in London, I was stoked to find out that our school's principal was none other than Julia Ruzicka. She is the bassist in Future Of The Left, who earlier this year released their fifth studio album, *The Peace & Truce Of Future Of The Left*. Ruzicka joined FOTL in 2010, and was previously in the post-hardcore band Million Dead. She also played bass in various underground punk bands, played for Tricky on a European festival run, and has just released her first solo album, under the project name *This Becomes Us*. The self-titled album is the first project she has led creatively, with all the songs being written on bass, led by bass, and then fleshed out by guitarist Ian Wilson of Art Brut and drummer Jack Egglestone, also of FOTL. Each song features a different vocalist, including contributions by Black Francis of the Pixies, Michael J. Sheehy of Miraculous Mule and many others.

Julia, how would you officially describe your bass playing?

I love a prominent, yet tasteful bass style. It's got to be up in the mix for me, whether on record or live, but not overplayed or dominating like some crazy egotistical squirrel. The idea is that you can hear its role, like some sexy anchor pinning down the whole band, while also hearing its personality. I love players who have character in their sound. I'm mainly a pick player, because a lot of the bands I end up playing in or forming are fairly energetic, a bit on the heavier side, and maybe a bit punky in places, needing a little aggression and power in the bass sound. The pick gives me the attack and precision I need. I'm not saying you can't get this sound with fingers, not at all! Cliff Burton was a case in point, but I just ended up more comfortable playing with a pick in these bands. And it works for me. I'm a hard hitter on the strings: I like the power I can generate with the pick. The equipment I use is highly responsible for my sound too, of course, and that's down to some classic pieces that are ever reliable. Those include an Orange AD200, which is crucial for my sound, with my Fender Precision going through it, and usually through a phenomenal Fredric Effects distortion pedal, the modified Russian Green to be precise. Pretty much without fail, at the end of every Future Of The Left gig, as I'm packing up, I always get asked how I get my sound and which pedals I use. And it's that Fredric Effects pedal that is key to my sound live.

Let's get down to business. Are you a slapper?

I do not slap, because I would have been kicked out of every band I was in. Slapping has its place, but it is to be used sparingly, unless you're in some bizarre fusion funk band constantly on acid. In that case, go for it and enjoy.

How did you get into bass?

I played guitar first, for many years, but something just switched in me. When I was in my late teens, I started to hear the bass a lot more in music, and to be honest, I think I was getting bored of guitar. I just had a lightbulb moment and decided to pick up the bass. I've never looked back: everything made sense for me musically when I started playing bass. Due to being excited about this revelation, and due to having very little money, I ended up buying a bass from a girl that I met through a feminist collective in Melbourne called Rock'n'Roll High School. It was a red Ibanez and it sounded terrible, but I was excited about it and didn't care.

What is your favourite bass ever?

As much as I adore my Rickenbacker, I have to give the prize position to my American Fender Precision. It's been through a lot with me, sounds amazing, and is just a total workhorse. It's reliable, tough, and an all-rounder. You can't go wrong with it. The Rickenbacker looks cool as fuck, and has that gorgeous distinct Ricky growl with those lovely toppy frequencies. It's not as versatile as the Fender Precision, just because it is such a unique sound with the Ricky, but it's great too.

Who are your bass heroes?

I don't want to sound like a total cliché, but I will be. The reason why I say the Kims – that's Kim Deal of the Pixies and Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth – is because they were very much responsible for that lightbulb moment I referred to earlier, when I switched to bass. As a young female musician, growing up in Australia throughout the 80s and 90s, and into rock music, female musicians of that ilk were thin on the ground. You couldn't help but be intrigued and impressed by them. They were in cool exciting bands, looked cool – as in not done up to exploit their gender, no T&A here! They looked comfortable in their own skin and were strong characters in terms of the role they played in their bands. They were my heroes for a multitude of reasons. In terms of pure playing ability, and I suppose also for the role he played in his band, Cliff Burton is a bass hero for me for sure. I mean, come on! He was an insane player: the technique and imagination he had. Incredible, and one of a kind, without a doubt.

Info: www.futureoftheleft.net, www.bimm.co.uk/study/tutors/london/julia-ruzicka

"I LOVE A PROMINENT, YET TASTEFUL BASS STYLE"

RETURN OF THE AK

Nathanael Underwood of extreme metallers Akercocke talks dogs and demons

As with any instrument, good bass playing is about understanding your role in the act of sonic creation. Be attentive to your technique and the range of ways you can produce the same notes without altering the settings on your amp. Pay particular attention to the drums, but don't always feel the need to mirror: interplay is also effective. Use negative space: what you don't play is as important as what you do play. To sit well in the band context, refine your sound as well as the feel of your notes, and don't be afraid to experiment. While the above is important, making sure you have a bass sound that can work for your style of playing and cut through without overpowering the rest of the band is just as important.

My bass style is dirty, aggressive, structured and deliberate – a bit like a pack of large stray dogs, their Machiavellian tendencies exacerbated by an extended stint in the wilderness, ruthlessly laying waste to an idyllic mountain hamlet. The notes you play are only given the importance allowed by the notes that you do not play.

I am in the process of acquiring a gorgeous five-string ESP Forest to use when we play in standard tuning. The extra low B is pivotal when summoning my cacodemonic spirit mirrorbeast. The fact that the extra string allows me to switch between our two tunings more easily if I need to is a plus. My favourite bass ever to date is my current neck-through four-string ESP Forest. It sounds spectacular both clean and overdriven, and has the versatility I had always been looking for. It's absolutely lush to play. I never thought a 35" scale could feel so comfortable.

I also use a Tech21 Sansamp – utterly essential, and probably the last bit of gear I would part with in a game of lose-all-your-gear poker before cables and bass. This is not the model with the easy 9V battery access. I'm not sure what the component difference is, but that one is pants. Then there's a Digitech Dirty Monkey – a Tube Screamer clone with more snarl and tonal control – and a Digitech Bass Squeeze, which is a subtle yet not-so-subtle component of the signal chain. If used to enhance an already solid delivery, judiciously applied compression will help bring your sound to the next level. My amp is a Hughes & Kettner Quantum 600 with 4x10 and 1x15 cabs.

My bass heroes include Dan Lilker, a prolific, fiercely independent under-recognised hero of extreme music; Steve DiGiorgio, a totally unique performer who played on some of my all-time favourite works; and Les Claypool, who transcends notions of bass-craft while exhibiting a spectacularly inventive approach to the role of the instrument. The greatest bass player that ever lived? There is a good reason you can't really have an informed conversation about greatest ever bass players without mentioning Jaco Pastorius.

Akercocke's new album is in the writing stages.
Info: http://akercocke.co.uk.

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SPACED

After playing bass with Spacemen 3, Spiritualized, the Brian Jonestown Massacre and Dead Skeletons, what's a man to do? Write a memoir of course. Julian Marszalek asks Will Carruthers the questions

Will Carruthers sighs and shakes his head when he stops to consider why he's chosen to write his memoir, *Playing The Bass With Three Left Hands*, now.

"I can't make music anymore because my ears are fucking shot," he says. "I blew them apart playing with Dead Skeletons. My ears actually hurt now, and whenever I hear a police siren go by I'm actually wincing." He pauses and then adds with a grim laugh, "but it does leave me in the great position of not having to play in bands anymore. I'm trying to hack out some kind of dignity for my old age!"

The tale of the former bassist of Spacemen 3 and Spiritualized, arguably two of the most influential post-60s psychedelic rock bands and, more recently, the Brian Jonestown Massacre and Dead Skeletons, Carruthers' book is a frank and frequently hilarious look at being in the third eye of a kaleidoscopic hurricane. Whether it's tales of herculean drug consumption, awkward recording sessions following the falling-out of Spacemen 3's visionaries Pete Kember and Jason Pierce, or non-existent royalties and poverty, the book is written from a surprisingly affectionate point of view that never strays into bitterness.

"I was pissed off at the time, especially when someone else was making money off of music that I helped to make. It was certainly difficult to deal with when I was skint," says Carruthers. "At the end of the day, I just go, fuck it – it's all in the past."

He's also happy to laugh at himself. One memorable episode recalls Spacemen 3's one and only performance of 'Dreamweapon', an epic piece of repetitive drone rock inspired by La Monte Young's notion of 'dream music', at Brentford's Waterman Arts Centre in 1988.

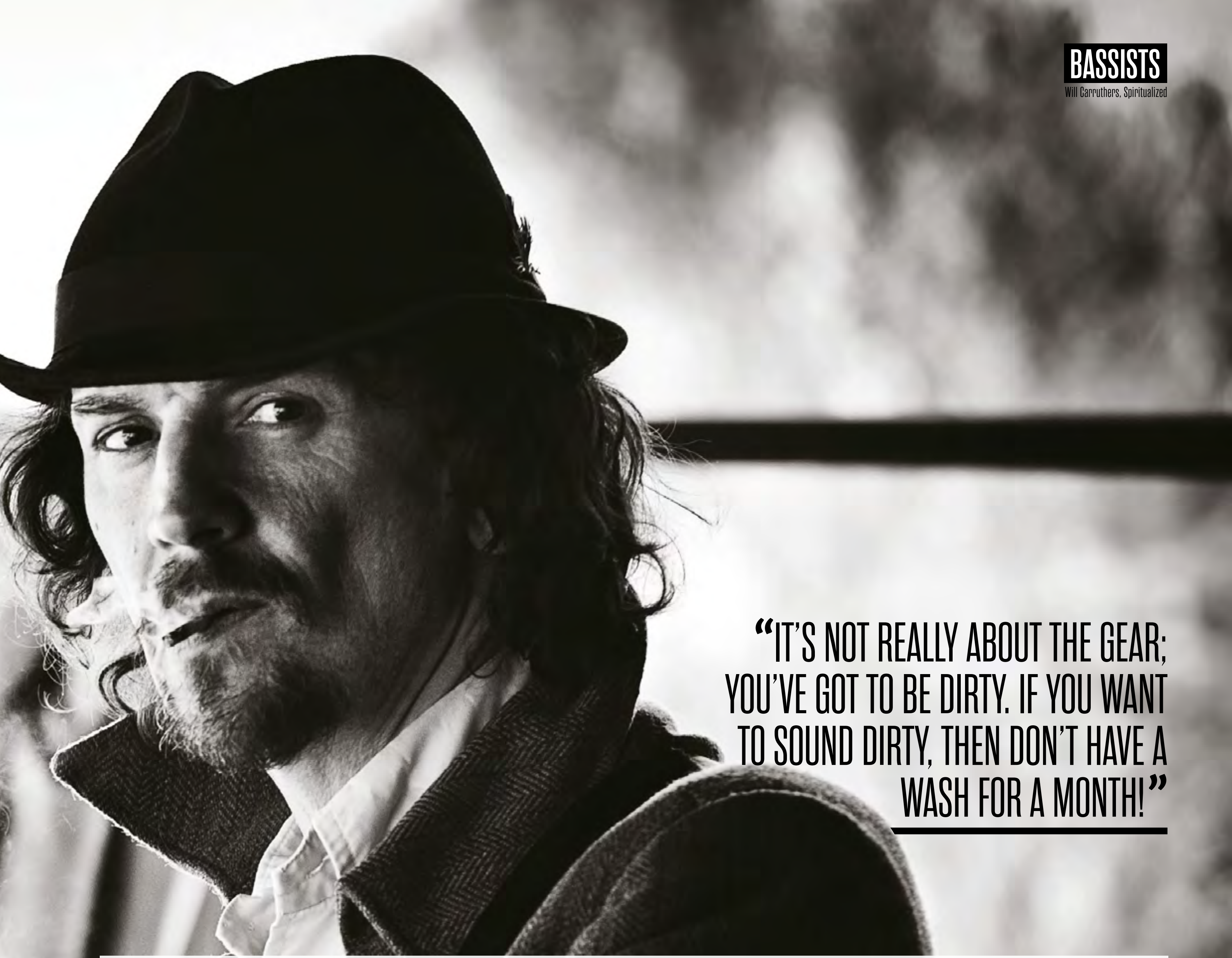
"We were very serious and very committed to that performance," recalls Carruthers. "It was transcendence, but it was hard work. You had to play over the tannoy of the cinema that was coming through from next door, and on top of that was the intense concentration of playing a single note for that length of time. It's not easy playing a single note for almost 45 minutes. And at the end, I realised that my bass amp wasn't switched on! There was a real absurdity about it all."

But for all the confessionals, it's the music and legacy of Spacemen 3 and Spiritualized that beat at the core of the book. While Britain was raving in the late 80s and early 90s, Spacemen 3, and then Spiritualized, were exploring drones and minimalism with an almost fundamental zeal. Carruthers is quick to point out the appeal of the drone: "For me, it sets aside all the noise of real life, and there's something calming about it. I guess it comes from gestation. You're in the womb for nine months and you hear the steady and constant heartbeat of your mother. I mean, I can't remember being in the womb but I guess it must sound droney down there and very repetitive.

"There's something calming about it, and as a musician it offers incredible potential for improvisation. See, because it's a drone, you're not thinking about chord structures: you can just tap into that part of you that doesn't think but just plays. It's almost as if you're transmitting pure feeling."

Having become a musician pretty much by accident, Carruthers writes with a great deal of warmth about his Gibson Thunderbird, an instrument with which he's formed a long lasting love-hate relationship. "It's horrible to play but I love the look of it," he reveals. "I walked into City Music in Birmingham, and I went, 'I want that one!' and paid my £400. I tried a number of basses including a Rickenbacker and a Music Man, but that 1976 Thunderbird was hanging from the wall and before I played a note on it I knew that was the bass I wanted. I'd never seen one before, but I played it, paid my money and walked out with it."

Pic by Francesca Sara Cauli



"IT'S NOT REALLY ABOUT THE GEAR; YOU'VE GOT TO BE DIRTY. IF YOU WANT TO SOUND DIRTY, THEN DON'T HAVE A WASH FOR A MONTH!"

Rather than relying on a phalanx of effects, Carruthers believes that the sound emanating from his gear comes from within: "I've found that the dirt comes through the people. It's not really about the gear; you've got to be dirty. If you want to sound dirty, then don't have a wash for a month!"

He continues: "Authenticity, I find, isn't always something that you're going to get just from your equipment. It's a bit of bugbear of mine. I've kept this bass, and played it and loved it and I haven't sold it, and I've swung it around my head and I've bled on it, and I've cursed it and I've blessed it, but if you get a good guitar, does it make you a good guitarist? Does it fuck."

The music he made on a run of albums that includes Spacemen 3's *Playing With Fire* and *Recurring*, Sonic Boom's *Spectrum* and Spiritualized's debut, *Lazer Guided Melodies*, are an ongoing source of pride – but he's eager to stress his role as a member of a team.

"Some of the stuff on *Lazer Guided Melodies* is really good. 'Run' is a pretty good bass line and 'If I Was With Her Now' has that whole, off-kilter rhythm section which is so fucking weird," he says. "The bass-line on Spacemen's 'I Love You' is a good one, I reckon. To be honest with you, it's not the bass-line that's important to me but the end result of what a band does together.

"But that said, with Spiritualized and some of the Spacemen stuff, the bass was pretty central. Pete and Jason liked my bass playing and they turned it up. 'Let Me Down Gently' pretty much has a bass solo going over the top – but the trick is to keep it simple."

That simplicity was picked up from influences such as the Stooges' Dave Alexander and the Funk Brothers' James Jamerson, as well as the musicians that he's worked with, he says. "I love all the Stooges' bass-lines because they're so fucking dirty. They're simple and they're effective," he enthuses. "And then there's the groove stuff like James Jamerson. When we were 15 or 16 and starting going to discos, the Motown stuff was what I really responded to even though I didn't know why. Years later I'd go back and study his bass work, and the stuff he did was incredible. He was on another level. It was so hard to learn his bass-lines – I bet even he had problems learning his own lines! He was so fluid and it was just coming straight out of him.

"They're simple but you try and do them. You try and hit that magic fucking groove and it's so subtle. That's the difference between full-on and falling flat on your face. But it's also about which drummer you play with, because rhythm sections can be such peculiar things. When you find a drummer that you can work with, there's often no logical reason why it works. I always loved working with [Spiritualized's] Jonny Mattock. We put in the hours, and after a while we got this weird, telepathic groove thing going. But it's a band thing. Who wants to hear a bass-line by itself?"

As with bringing his bass skills to more contemporary psychedelic practitioners such as Iceland's Dead Skeletons and established masters of the form, the Brian Jonestown Massacre, the experience of revisiting his formative years has made Carruthers take a look at himself. "I learned a lot about myself from writing this book," he confesses. "I hated this book when I finished it. I didn't like the fact that it might piss people off, and I didn't want it to be destructive in any way – even though when I first started writing it, it was like, 'Revenge! Revenge!' People have said nice things about it so I've come to like myself a bit better."

Finally, does Carruthers have any advice for fledgling bassists? "Sheer bloody-mindedness," comes the reply. "You've got to assert yourself and make your presence felt. You've got to know when to shut the fuck up and when to make yourself felt and pull things along."

Playing The Bass With Three Left Hands **is out now on Faber & Faber. Info: www.willcarruthers.com.**

Pic by Jennifer McCord

SHELL SHOCK

Paul Shelley, bassist of the anarchic outfit Heck, is tearing up the UK hardcore underground a treat. Hywel Davies ducks for cover

We Brits have always thought ourselves to be geographically safe from the wrath of nature – and we were until this Nottingham four-piece Heck showed up. With the power of a category five hurricane, Heck have been laying waste to the underground since 2009, becoming one of the scene's most exhilarating acts.

Previously known as Baby Godzilla, the quartet have been crushing cities across the UK and Europe with their whirlwind live shows. Figuratively and physically speaking, bassist Paul Shelley has his hands full. Providing rhythms so grounded that they could anchor a frigate, he keeps his bandmates Jonny Hall (guitar), Matt Reynolds (vocals/guitar) and Tom Marsh (drums) firmly on track while they go off on one into the crowd. With their debut album, *Instructions*, turning heads and burning off eyebrows this year, he talks with *BGM* backstage at Cardiff's Clwb Ifor Bach before hitting the stage.

"I get accused of being the least active member of the band. People are like, 'Why don't you go into the crowd?' It's because I'm part of the rhythm section who holds it all down on the stage," he says. "It's all about having a good time. As soon as I'm having a good time, it's dead easy. There's definitely an element of muscle memory to it and you concentrate less on the playing. Obviously I play bum notes from time to time, but I don't give a shit. It's all about having fun."

Where many would side with a pick under such musical extremities, Shelley has bravely taken the finger route. "I've never really played with a pick. I know it's extra work, but I can get to the strings very easily with my fingers. It just takes practice, practice, practice. I also use an extra finger if we do the really fast stuff. I'm trying to teach myself to use that third finger so that it feels normal. It's difficult because it feels like it doesn't want to do it, but I am making a bit of progress."

Shelley's Höfner H185 is no violin bass: it sure as hell packs a mighty punch. Though it's a bit battered and bruised, the bassist has brought out the beast in this beauty. "I've put a couple of pickups in my bass which are made by a guy in Nottingham who doesn't make pickups anymore," he says. "I think he used to call them Salt and Pepper, I'm not too sure. They're just like Jazz pickups; they really bring out the attack. For me, because I'm playing with my fingers, it's exactly what I need and they really make everything pop. They really bring out my Bass Centre Elite strings too. The dudes there really sort me out and they are so much better quality than any other strings I've used. I don't confess to being a big gearhead. I don't know much but I know what I like."

His approach to his bass tone is rather selfless, as he explains: "I think the tonality of the individual should not go above the tonality of the band. I use two Ampeg SVT Classics named 'Mavis' and 'Bertha'. I only use one at a time, the other is just a backup. We went for a while where I was like, 'Yeah, my bass tone's great', but then we spent a bit of time trying to dial it back so it sits better within the band. It's like the guitars, quite full sounding, so we moulded it in so it doesn't get lost."

Instructions is a jaw-dropping debut album, densely packed with teeth-gritting riffs that come flying at you from every direction. Asked to choose one song that stands out, Shelley replies: "I really like 'Totem'. It has a great vocal, drums, bass and harmonica break in the middle which is really awesome. It's a change of pace on the album, which is good because if you blast everyone's ears out all the time, there's no time to let your ears rest. We like to put in a little bit of a lull… but then we'll carry on to smash your head in again!"

***Instructions* is out now via Npag Industries.**
Info: www.musicglue.com/heck

GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass speakers and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

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ENFIELD
Avenger II 4 and 5

Return of the Avengers? Not a film but a consolidation of ongoing bass design at Enfield. Mike Brooks assesses these re-established reincarnations

Enfield Guitars
www.enfieldguitars.com

At *BGM* Towers we're very keen to champion British luthiers – and we're proud to remind you that we carried exclusive first reviews of the Enfield Cannon and subsequent Avenger models, the latter taking the remarkable technological developments that the former spearheaded and wrapping them up in a more traditional bass package. The groundbreaking Sims Super 8 pickup is now firmly established as the more aesthetically pleasing Super Quad unit, and the Enfield catalogue now boasts several ranges, yet somehow, it feels as if the Avenger models have been left behind – until now.

Build Quality

Enfield owner Martin Sims has been quick to stress that the Avenger II models will be made as 'stock models', a standardised range if you like, an inventory of which will always be available. They're made in a small range of colours with standard characteristics and features, before encroaching on the territory of the pricier 'custom' models. That's not to

say that certain aspects can't be changed – they can – but the price will vary accordingly.

Both of these working prototypes are fully functional instruments in every respect: the only difference between these models and those that will be made for customer purchase is that the bodies of these two basses are made from basswood, whereas solid colour models will feature a mahogany body and visible grain instruments will use alder or swamp ash as a body timber.

The two instruments carry the visual hallmarks of a Jazz, whose famous offset bodyshape works very well with the matte black finish. Although both instruments are essentially the same in many respects, the body of the five-string has been widened to keep the visual dimension ratio, due to the broader neck, in proportion. The three-ply pearloid scratchplate and chrome control plates maintain the old-school visuals, while the cutaways offer unhindered access to the upper frets of the 22-fret quartersawn hard rock maple necks.

The four-string bass has a slim 38mm nut width and a full C-shaped neck profile behind the nut, whereas the five-string instrument has a slimmer D neck profile that works well with the slowly broadening

SimS
SimS

rosewood fingerboard: both basses feature 19mm string spacing at the bridge. Truss rod access on both basses is via a smoothly finished 'fall off', which makes the truss rod easily accessible without fear of causing any damage to the body finish or scratchplate.

Despite a fair amount of neck dive on both instruments, particularly the five-string, both basses balanced nicely on straps and although neither bass is overly heavy, it's good to know that the models available for you to buy will weigh less due to the body timbers that will be used. Also, these necks do not feature graphite reinforcement: Martin tells us that the neck timbers undergo a six-month damp/dry process to ensure stability.

Both necks feel supremely solid, with tight five-bolt attachments. The satin finished necks, along with the player-friendly neck camber, give the impression that these are instruments to really play and get involved with. Abalone position markers adorn the front face of the rosewood fingerboard, while white position markers have been used on the neck edge. Nickel and black Hipshot tuners perfectly match the Hipshot A bridge and the black control set of the Glockenklang two-band EQ preamp. The bass is switched between active and passive mode via a push/pull volume control, followed by a pickup pan control and a stacked bass and treble control, which both offer cut and boost. Interestingly, when both

"CONSIDERING THE REMIT AND DESIGN PREMISE OF THE RANGE, MARTIN HAS PRETTY MUCH HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD"

controls are set flat, the preamp is passive and the signal strength is totally flat. Both basses feature magnetic backplates which are easily removed and make for easy battery changes.

Sounds And Playability

We've devoted plenty of page space to the Super Quad pickups in the past, but for the uninitiated, here's a summary in a nutshell. Both Super Quad units feature four separate coils, so a pair of pickups houses eight coils in total. Using the three-way switches, each unit can be switched from a split-coil operation (indicated by a red LED), to a single-coil format (green LED) to a humbucker setup (blue LED). The single coil replicates a typical Precision sound (with the pickup pan focused on the neck pickup), the twin single-coil replicates a typical Jazz (with the pickup pan control set in the centre position) and the humbucker emulates a Music Man Stingray (with the pickup pan control set to the bridge pickup).

These are highly playable instruments: for working prototypes, they may as well be finished instruments for sale. I used both basses on gigs and they passed the live test with flying colours: both instruments exhibited great sustain and despite their obvious neck dimension differences, these instruments are comfortable, unrestricted playing machines. If you take the EQ out of the equation and use the pickups alone, you can create a splendidly varied tonal palette, basically allowing the coil switching options to act as tone generators, changing the tone and frequency

response to the vibration of the string. From there, you can add EQ as you require. In a band context, the different tones really stand out from one another, giving the bass not one distinguishable voice but many. Ever wanted to play a bass with two single-coil pickups? Now you can. Or how about a humbucker in the neck position and a single coil in the bridge position, or maybe a split-coil in the bridge position? Or how about a single coil alone in the neck position, like Sting and his 50s Precision? You can now use just one bass to get these fundamental tonal characteristics.

The Glockenklang preamp does a fine job of rounding out the bottom end and adding some glassiness to the treble. The low B string was reasonably articulate on the five-string: some extra mid EQ wouldn't have gone amiss. Indeed, if you require mid EQ options, you can specify a three-band EQ, and the final price will reflect this.

Conclusions

The simplicity of the pickup switching and the flexible tone-shaping make either bass a winner: at these prices, considering what is included in the price, anyone choosing an Enfield Avenger II as their next bass will no doubt be very pleased with themselves. Considering the remit and design premise of the range, Martin has pretty much hit the nail on the head: strip away the custom options of the other Enfield models, get the fundamentals right and let the Super Quads do their job, and you have an instrument that works on many levels without the precious boutique tag. These are meant to be played, not kept in a case or hung on the wall. Check them out!

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Enfield Avenger II 4

Price | £1770
Made in | UK
Body | Basswood (mahogany for production models), matte black finish
Neck | Quartersawn hard rock maple, 34" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on, five bolt
Nut width | 38mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 22
Pickups | Sims Super Quad pickups x 2
Electronics | Glockenklang active two-band EQ
Controls | Volume (push pull active/passive), pickup pan, stacked bass/treble boost/cut, coil control selector switches
Hardware | Hipshot A black and nickel bridge, Hipshot black and nickel elephant ear tuners
Weight | 4.1 kg
Case/gig bag included? | Yes, Hiscox hardshell case
Left-hand option available? | Yes, available to order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A four-string Jazz Bass variant with almost limitless tonal options. What's not to like?
Minus | Lack of mid EQ
Overall | A truly inviting bass experience, playable and comfortable, fitted with great technology

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Enfield Avenger II 5

Price | £1970
Made in | UK
Body | Basswood (mahogany for production models), matte black finish
Neck | Quartersawn hard rock maple, 34" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on, five bolt
Nut width | 48mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 22
Pickups | Sims Super Quad pickups x 2
Electronics | Glockenklang active two-band EQ
Controls | Volume (push pull active/passive), pickup pan, stacked bass/treble boost/cut, coil control selector switches
Hardware | Hipshot black and nickel A bridge, Hipshot black and nickel elephant ear tuners
Weight | 4.5 kg
Case/gig bag included? | Yes, Hiscox hardshell case
Left-hand option available? | Yes, available to order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A great five-string with a tonal palette to cover all eventualities
Minus | The low B string could do with some mid EQ or a 35" scale
Overall | A seriously great bass for under £2000

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £3,395
Made In | New Zealand
Colour | Natural
Body | Salusalu with North American walnut top
Neck | Mairi and aircraft graded laminates, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Full through-body neck and core
Nut Width | 42mm
Fingerboard | New Zealand black mairi
Frets | 24
Pickups | Non-specific humbucker
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, passive bass roll-off, passive treble roll-off, midrange setting (10 options with push/pull and bypass)
Hardware | Stainless steel Tomm Stanley™ Tuning System, black mairi bridge
Weight | 3.8 kg
Case/gig bag included | Lite-flite case and extra strings
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Ergonomically different, but everything works, with a varied tonal palette
Minus | The price will always limit its appeal, and resale value may be limited
Overall | An interesting instrument that does things differently but never to the detriment of the instrument. If passive basses are your thing, test one soon!

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	9/10
SOUND QUALITY	8/10
VALUE	8/10

Photography by Eckie

STONEFIELD 1-4C

A marriage of exotic timbers, invention and ingenuity, this four-string from Stonefield has much going for it on paper. Mike Brooks gets up close and personal

Stonefield Musical Instrument Company
www.stonefieldmusic.com

It's a few months since we met Tomm Stanley at the London Bass Guitar Show, where he unveiled his Stonefield creation. We looked at a Slimline five-string model back in *BGM* 130, and here for our delectation is a four-string model featuring classic string spacing. There's no disputing the distinctive nature of these instruments. The five-string threw us some enjoyable curveballs – does the four-string model offer more of the same?

Build Quality

The rounded body curves, sculpted cutaways and combination of Fijian salusalu wood, walnut and southern hemisphere through-neck

timber laminates create a visually pleasing combination. For lovers of natural, organic-looking and -sounding instruments, the 1-4C posts its colours to the mast in no uncertain terms. Despite the lack of any contouring to the front or back of the body, the bass is reasonably comfortable to wear and the weight distribution is excellent. At 3.8 kilos, and with reduced weight due to the tuning system being located at the bridge, it never feels as though you are working against the instrument.

Many aspects of this bass may appear to be radical. Timber has been used for the floating bridge as a counterpoint over which the strings pass, as on an acoustic instrument, while the tuning system – which recently acquired an official US patent as the Tomm Stanley™ Tuning System – is a superb piece of engineering. It has been designed by Tomm himself, using materials and components that will never rust during the instrument's lifetime: this goes for all the metalwork on the instrument. The bridge utilises stainless steel, brass and anodised aluminium, and a titanium option is also available that reduces the overall instrument weight by 112 grams at a cost of £40 per string.

The neck is sizeable but comfortable, with a 42mm nut width and a full C-shaped profile: the 19mm string spacing makes it a very easy neck to play and navigate. There are no front facing position markers but white dots have been used on the side of the neck, so visually it's a clean bass when viewed from the front, the warm timber hues creating an impressive aesthetic. Water-based lacquers have been used to protect the timbers, and the body has had two coats of Danish oil finish applied, followed by a single coat of teak oil.

Sounds And Playability

The four-control system incorporating volume, bass roll-off, treble roll-off and the 10-setting midrange control (using a push/pull control with five settings in each position and an additional bypass setting) give the player serious flexibility to shape the tone, so don't expect a selection of mundane passive tones. There really are some impressive 'bass colours' available here. Unsurprisingly, in an acoustic context, the instrument resonates and sustains in an impressive fashion: vibrancy is definitely what this bass is all about.

Plugging in, the smooth, rounded tones that were evident with the five-string are here again, supplemented with an added spring in their step, maybe due to less timber in the construction. The woody character still stands out but a throaty, upper-mid bite can also be heard, especially in the upper register. Fingerstyle playing takes some of the attack away, but switch to playing with a pick and that initial bite on the string stands out clearly.

Although the bass appears quite chunky, the playing experience is very comfortable after an initial period of adjustment and the natural character of the instrument is incredibly pleasing. The bass and treble roll-offs work well to offer some light and shade to your tone: the increase and decrease are gradual, not on and off like some passive tone controls we could mention. Finding settings with the mid-control that work for you is a process of experimentation, but the differences between each setting are clear and obvious – and thankfully, never harsh or extreme.

"AS A NEW PRODUCT ON THE BLOCK, AND WITH VISUALS THAT DEVIATE FROM THE NORM, A STONEFIELD BASS REQUIRES SOMETHING OF A LEAP OF FAITH"

Conclusion

As a new product on the block, and with visuals that deviate from the norm, a Stonefield bass requires something of a leap of faith – but if you make that leap, you will be rewarded with a highly enjoyable instrument. Pricing was a topic for discussion in March, and the Brexit effect didn't help matters for an instrument manufactured in New Zealand, but Tomm informs us that a new range of cost-conscious instruments are in progress as we speak. Nevertheless, the 1-4C is a fine instrument in its own right and if you put one through its paces, you'll realise why these basses were one of the talking points at this year's LBGS.

PROMENADE MUSIC

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www.promenademusic.co.uk

4 String Basses

- 15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
- 13994 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless Bass
- 15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
- 10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag
- 15712 - Bubinga V940 Bubinga 4 String Bass, S'hand
- 13805 - Cort Action Deluxe, Faded Grey Burst
- 12314 - Cort GB4 Custom Spalted Maple Top
- 12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 4 String Bass

Fender

- 15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass
- 14607 - Fender 64 Closet Classic J, Sburst, Used
- 14643 - Fender Am Dlx Dimension Bass IV Cayenne
- 15778 - Fender American Elite Jazz Bass Sunburst
- 9084 - Fender American Special Jazz Bass, CAR
- 14582 - Fender American Std Jazz Bass, O. White
- 15569 - Fender Am. Std Precision Bass, Sunburst
- 15749 - Fender American Std PBass, White, Used
- 15354 - Fender American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass,
- 15207 - Fender Classic Special 60's P Bass FSR
- 15536 - Fender Dlx Active Jazz Bass Surf Pearl
- 15529 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass IV, ACBurst
- 15533 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink
- 15377 - Fender Japan Classic 70s Jazz, Sunburst
- 15412 - Fender Jap. FSR Classic 70s P Bass White
- 15761 - Fender Japan Mustang Bass, Vintage White
- 15686 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Sonic Blue
- 12426 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass Brown Sunburst
- 9909 - Fender Standard P Bass, Lake Placid Blue
- 12689 - G & L L1500 USA 4 String Bass, Sunburst
- 15266 - G & L Tribute Series M2000, Sunburst
- 12695 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String Bass Guitar
- 12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
- 14746 - Jaguar Bass Special SS, Fender Rumble 15
- 15096 - LE Marquis NY Violin Bass, Lefty, Used

Marleaux

- 15409 - Marleaux Consat Custom 4 String Bass
- 15403 - Marleaux Sopran Short Scale 4 String
- 14167 - Marleaux Votan XS Deluxe, Black Burst
- 14946 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ Black, Maple Neck
- 9172 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Black

Orange

- 15107 - Orange O Bass, Off-Black
- 15105 - Orange O Bass in Orange
- 11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
- 13337 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Black Cherry Stain
- 14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
- 15733 - Squier Affinity Precision Bass/Amp Pack
- 15370 - Squier Classic Vibe 50s P Bass, W.Blonde
- 14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst
- 14613 - Vintage Icon VJ74 MRBK, Distressed Black
- 14490 - Vintage LV4BB Lefthanded 4 String, Black
- 14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
- 14489 - Vintage VJ74MSSB Bass, Sunset Sunburst
- 15268 - Warwick Adam Clayton Solid Creme White

WestCoast

- 6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
- 8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

- 14636 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
- 10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
- 5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
- 15710 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Exotic Wood, Natural
- 13927 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Black
- 13926 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Natural
- 13137 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass In Mist Green
- 13138 - Yamaha TRBX304 4 String Bass In White
- 14935 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Black

5 String Basses

- 0000 - Cort 8 Models In Stock Now
- 14639 - Fender American Deluxe Dimension V-Burst
- 15360 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V Black
- 15281 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V, Nat
- 15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
- 13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
- 9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
- 15261 - Lakland 5501 5 String Bass, Black
- 15410 - Marleaux Consat Custom 5 String Bass
- 15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
- 15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
- 15406 - Marleaux MBass Custom 2012 5 String Bass
- 13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
- 12198 - MusicMan Stingray 5 Sunburst
- 15713 - Overwater Progress Deluxe 5, Pre-Owned
- 10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
- 5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
- 15466 - Sadowsky Will Lee 5-String, Green, Used
- 15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
- 12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
- 11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
- 15294 - Warwick RB Corvette 5,White High Polish
- 15295 - Warwick RB Streamer NT4, Yellow Polish
- 15293 - Warwick Corvette $$ 5-String, Black
- 6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
- 8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
- 13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
- 7223 - Yamaha TRB5 5-String Bass in Sunburst
- 13389 - Yamaha TRBX305 Bass, Candy Apple Red
- 10310 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Acoustic Basses

- 15726 - Farida AB10 4 String Acoustic Bass, Nat
- 15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
- 5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
- 5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
- 5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
- 13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
- 10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
- 15771 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass,Mahog.
- 14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway
- 15157 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway

Electric Upright Basses

- 4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
- 5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
- 14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
- 6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

- 15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
- 13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
- 13371 - Squier Vintage Modified Fretless Bass
- 14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

String Deals

- 2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
- 2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
- 2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
- 2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
- 2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
- 2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

- 13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
- 5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown Engineering

- 15188 - Ashdown AAA 120 15T 120w 1 x 15"
- 15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
- 15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
- 15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
- 6759 - Ashdown ABM C115 500 Evo 3 (575w)
- 6459 - Ashdown ABM C210T-500 EVO 3 (575W)
- 15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp with B/tooth
- 8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
- 8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
- 15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
- 15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
- 15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
- 5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
- 13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp

EDEN

- 13705 - Eden D210XLT Bass Cabinet
- 12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
- 12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
- 12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
- 13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
- 13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
- 13704 - Eden EM275 Stereo Bass Amp Combo

Fender

- 12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
- 13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
- 4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
- 12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
- 15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
- 13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
- 15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

Hartke

- 14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
- 9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
- 9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

- 9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
- 6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
- 5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W)
- 13279 - MarkBass Markacoustic AC601 Combo
- 6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W 1x12)
- 5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
- 5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
- 9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
- 9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

Orange

- 15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Amp
- 15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Amp Combo
- 15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Amp Combo
- 15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

- 6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
- 4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w,1x12)
- 4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
- 4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
- 5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
- 15733 - Squier Affinity Precision Bass/Amp Pack
- 15728 - Trace Elliot 1215SMX Bass Combo
- 15433 - Vox Pathfinder 10 Bass

Bass Heads

- 15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
- 14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
- 13641 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Head
- 15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
- 15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Rack
- 13192 - Ashdown Five 15 BBH 220w Big Boy Head
- 14171 - Ashdown RM220 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
- 15179 - Ashdown RM500 EVO 500w Rootmaster Head
- 14531 - Ashdown RM800 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
- 14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
- 13200 - Eden E300 Bass Amplifier
- 13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
- 13196 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
- 15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
- 9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
- 9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
- 12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
- 15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier

Mark bass

- 14828 - Mark Bass 300 Bass Amp Head
- 10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
- 6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
- 9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
- 5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
- 7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
- 9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
- 9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
- 15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
- 9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
- 15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
- 9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
- 15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
- 15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
- 6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
- 8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head

Bass Cabinets

- 13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet

Ashdown Engineering

- 15191 - Ashdown AAA 115T 200w 1 x 15" Cabinet
- 5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
- 6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
- 15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
- 15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
- 15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
- 6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
- 15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10"
- 15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12" Cab.
- 15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15" Cab.
- 15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10"
- 14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
- 13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
- 13197 - Eden EX112 Compact Bass Cab
- 13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
- 13199 - Eden EX410 Bass Cabinet
- 13201 - Eden EX410SC Bass Cabinet
- 14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab
- 9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
- 15629 - Hartke HyDrive 115 Bass Cabinet

Mark bass

- 5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
- 6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
- 6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
- 5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
- 9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
- 9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
- 4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
- 5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
- 10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
- 10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
- 10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
- 15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
- 6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
- 6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
- 5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

DAN LAKIN
Rick Rosas Custom Jazz

A familiar luthier, a familiar bass model and a familiar bass legend. What's not to like? Mike Brooks puts this take on the most popular bass design on the planet under the microscope

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

A Jazz is a Jazz is a Jazz... or is it? Every bass should be taken on its individual merits, and this Rick Rosas Custom model is priced competitively at £999 – but does it truly cut the mustard in a market area that is bloated to breaking point?

Build Quality

If classic visuals are what you're looking for, they don't come much simpler or more refined than a Jazz bass in Lake Placid Blue with a maple bound fingerboard and block markers. With clean lines, it's stylish to a fault and with a white three-ply scratchplate and matching headstock, this bass is off to a good start straight out of the box. The classic offset alder body (ash is an option) style has been maintained, with the usual player-friendly contouring

on the front and rear while the gloss-finished body and headstock give the bass a pleasing sheen. The lower cutaway gives unhindered access to the upper regions of the 20-fret maple fingerboard and reassuringly, everything is where it should be.

Although the bass isn't overly heavy, weighing in at 4.2 kilos, there is some noticeable neck-dive, but as usual, once placed on a strap and in a playing position, the instrument balances relatively well. The oil-finished neck is everything you'd expect of a Jazz neck: slim and slinky, with supreme playability. The neck dimensions are fabulous, with a traditional 39mm nut width, slim C-shaped profile, pristine set-up and no sharp frets in evidence, this truly is a sumptuous neck to play. Pearl block position markers have been used on the front fingerboard facing and black markers on the side of the neck.

The four-bolt neck pocket is as tight as possible and neck stability is improved by the addition of two graphite strips within the neck's construction. Truss rod adjustments can be made with the wheel adjustment at the bass of the neck, so don't expect any neck complications any time

Photography by Eckie

"THIS INSTRUMENT, MUCH LIKE THE PRECISION WE LOOKED AT PREVIOUSLY, IS VERY IMPRESSIVE"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £999
Made in | Korea
Body | Alder in Lake Placid Blue finish
Neck | Maple with graphite reinforcement, 34" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on, four bolt
Nut width | 39mm
Fingerboard | Maple
Frets | 20
Pickups | Lakin-designed single-coil pickups x 2
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Hipshot A chrome bridge, Hipshot chrome elephant ear tuners
Weight | 4.2 kg
Case/gig bag included? | No
Left-hand option available? | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Just about as good as it gets for a Jazz under £1000
Minus | Try as we might, we couldn't find one
Overall | A splendid attempt from Lakin to create a great playing experience by tweaking a perennial classic

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

soon. Chrome Hipshot hardware has been used throughout, with reversed open gear machine heads, string tree and a Hipshot A-style bridge, which permits through-bridge and through-body stringing. Lakin-designed single-coil pickups provide those familiar Jazz tones alongside passive twin volume controls and a single tone.

Sounds And Playability

Even before plugging in, this bass exhibits a very lively character: there's no disputing how vibrant and resonant it is. Plugged in and with no active circuit to cloud its delivery, this bass is every bit a prime example of a desirable Jazz in the sonic department. The control pots offer a progressive increase and decrease through their whole turn, and rolling between each pickup shows a noise-free response.

As expected, the neck pickup has a fatter, more rounded, ballsy signal compared to the bridge unit, which offers a clear, twangy response. Soloing the bridge pickup with a fair degree of the tone control opened up illustrates the honky, single-coil sound that we all recognise. What was surprising was just how pleasing the overall tone was from either pickup or any mix in

between: there's no harshness, thinness or discernible clank. That's not to say that a considerable passive snarl isn't achievable – you just need to dial it in. Slappers will no doubt appreciate the smoothness of the bottom end and crispness in the upper register, while rockers and fingerstyle players will feel equally at home.

Conclusions

This instrument, much like the Precision we looked at previously, is very impressive. When you consider the pricetag, it makes you wonder just what you are getting when some companies charge almost double, if not more, for very similar instruments. It's very difficult to pick out any faults: some of the colours on offer may be a little uninspiring but then again, they hark back to a classic period. Tonally, this is as good a representation of a passive Jazz as you could hope to find, and the fact that it pulls the player back for more is a good indication of the quality on offer. I suggest you check one out very soon indeed.

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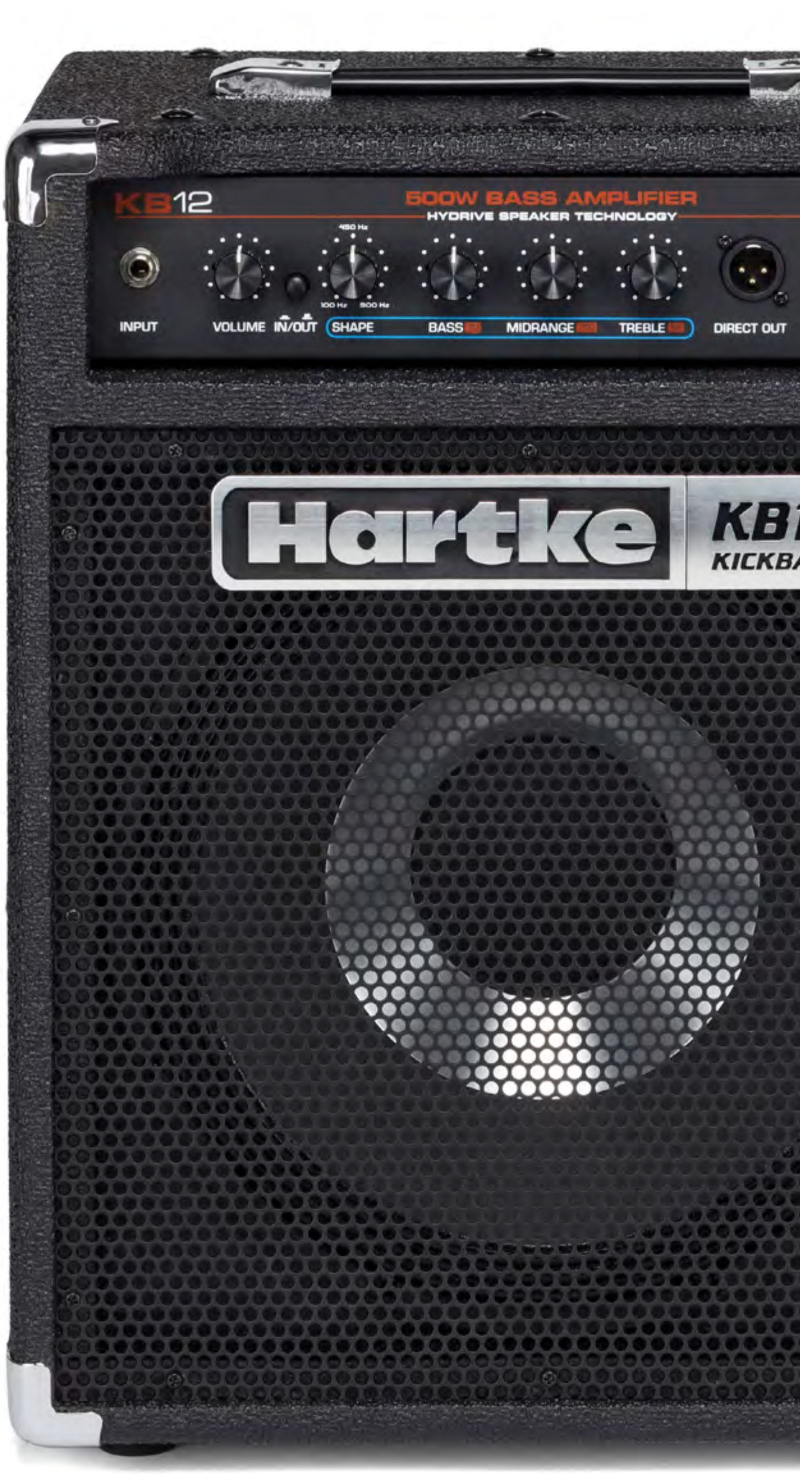
HARTKE
Kickback KB12 and KB15 Bass Combos

Hartke have recently revamped their Kickback combo amps. We send Duff Battye (and his bad back) to see if the tweaks of the KB12 and KB15 make the already solid unit even better

Korg UK
http://korguk.com/hartke

One of the strongest plus points of Hartke's Kickback series is its simplicity. They do exactly what they say on the tin – the Kickback name itself refers to the design, which allows them to be 'kicked back' to point the amp upwards. The combos are not unique in this feature, but it's smart and user friendly, allowing the amp to be utilised in a full band practice but also tilted up when a bit more subtlety might be required – or if you are playing for someone up high... The two combos offer the same 500W power, the only difference being (you've guessed it) a choice of 12" or 15" speaker. Hartke have utilised some pretty funky technology to keep the weights down in the series. The cone driver is a mix of paper and aluminium: this, with the addition of Neodymium magnets means that the KB15 comes in at just over 16kg and the KB12 at just under 13kg. The 15 looks a big bit of kit with a powerful punch, but it's light and easily handled. This would be one practice amp you wouldn't mind hauling up a set of stairs.

The styling is, in line with the whole vibe, simple. The back is used simply for the power socket. The front is easily accessible with a



standard on/off switch, input, phones and direct out, complemented with volume and shape controls (the latter bypassable with an in/out switch) and a three-band EQ. It's simple and effective, and if you have a good-quality bass, the boosts available through the EQ are plenty for most situations. If you want effects loops and other sophisticated features, then look elsewhere.

The tones you can achieve with this limited setup are fine. I wouldn't want to record with these options, but recording isn't what this series is for. As a live and practice combo the lack of complication is welcome, allowing you to concentrate on what you are playing, not what it sounds like. Volume-wise, 500 watts is more than sufficient: I

"THEY HAVE RESISTED THE TEMPTATION TO PIMP THE AMPS UNNECESSARILY, CONCENTRATING INSTEAD ON REAL WORLD BENEFITS — POWER AND WEIGHT"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Hartke Kickback KB12 and KB15
Price | £442.80, £538.80
Made in | USA
Power | 500W
Speaker | 12" (KB12) or 15" (KB15)
Features | HyDrive paper/aluminium cone driver, Neodymium magnets, two way (upright or Kickback) cabinet design, Shape EQ knob, three band EQ knobs, XLR direct output, ¼" headphone output, ¼" passive/active bass input, moulded strap carry handle.
Weight | 12.8kg (KB12) or 16.2kg (KB15)

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Simple, attractive styling, good value and very lightweight
Minus | Limited EQ
Overall | A winning update of an already solid package

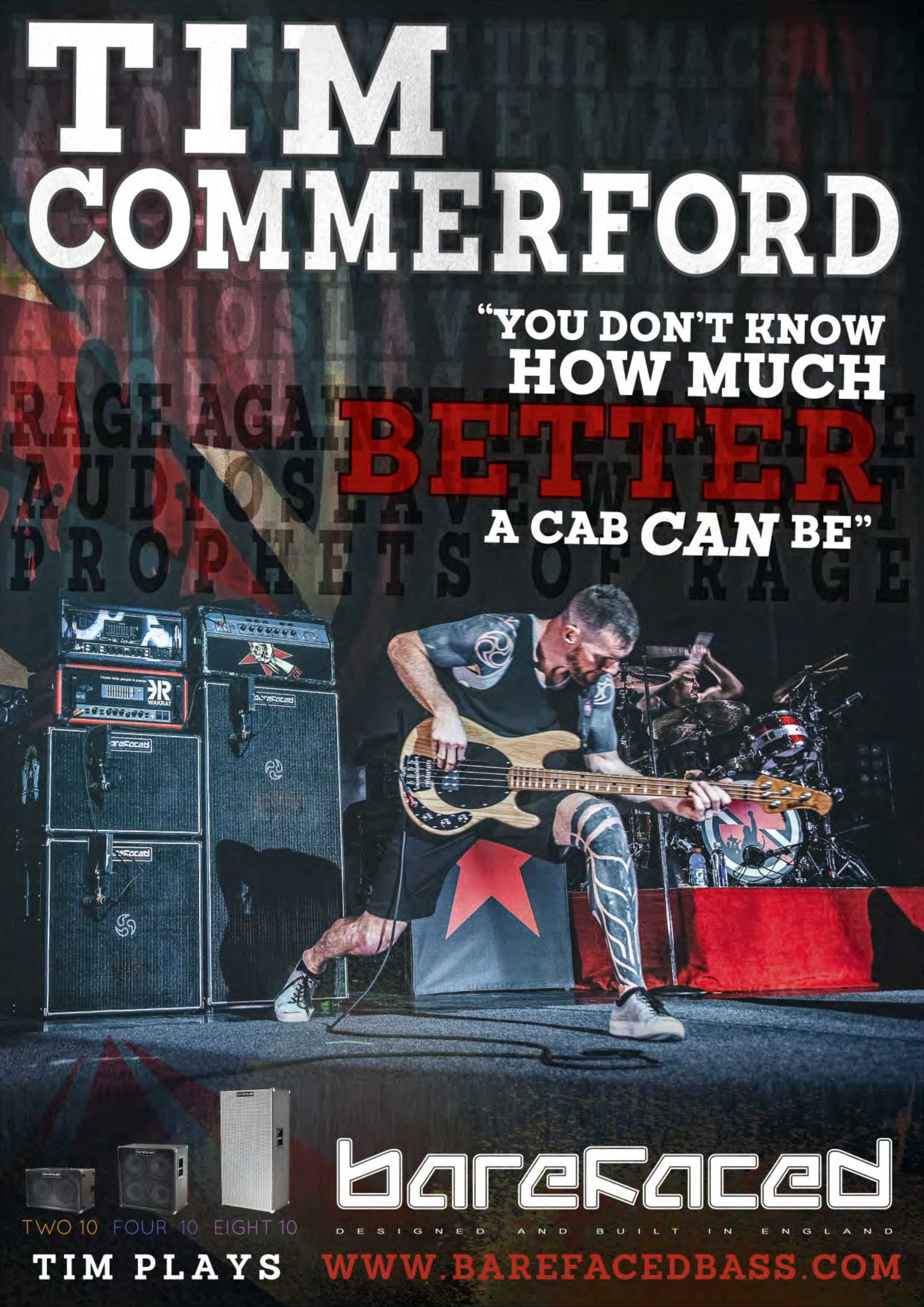
BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■□□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

actually struggled to play at a low volume on the KB15, direct through the speaker. Whether you will ever need these combos driving anywhere near full whack is debatable, but it's better to have that option than not, and a 500W combo will suffice in all but the biggest of live settings.

The weight saving of the new range is very noticeable: the KB15 is over five kilos lighter than the Kickback 15. For the majority of us who don't have the luxury of a road crew, this should not be sniffed at. I could easily manoeuvre the KB15 using one hand – imagine that with a 500W combo 15 years ago. (I remember, back in the old days utilising a small crane at practices, and sighing deeply whenever a gig at the Garage in Islington was mooted…)

Hartke have revamped two already strong units. They have resisted the temptation to pimp the amps unnecessarily, concentrating instead on real world benefits – power and weight. In doing so, they have created a very worthwhile addition to the combo market.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DARKGLASS

Duality Dual Fuzz Engine

Not one but two fuzz circuits in one pedal, hence the name! Mike Brooks gets downright dirty with the new Darkglass

The Gallery
www.thebassgallery.com

The Duality Dual Fuzz from Darkglass Electronics offers not one but two distinct fuzz circuits, which can be blended any way you choose with your clean signal, therefore creating a whole range of fuzztone filth. Classily presented in a brushed silver matte finish with a mirror chromed top facing, the four black controls all turn reassuringly smoothly while the stomp button is solid and firmly operated: the whole pedal is evidently built to last. The Blend control ranges from a clean signal when turned fully left to a positively dripping fuzztone when panned fully right, although it is possible to hear both the clean and effected signals simultaneously. Level adds grit and distortion, while the Filter control increases the resonance, top end clarity and definition. The Duality control is the defining control; panned fully left, it initiates the gated saw-tooth circuit, a thick, classic sounding fuzz that gradually makes way for a more modern, high-gain sounding fuzz as the control is panned right, with various mixes of the two available across the full pan from left to right.

Impressively, articulation is never lost with this pedal, although if you prefer to lessen the high-end characteristics (we're after fuzz, not fizz, after all), roll off the Filter control to your preference as any dodgy fretting or mistakes will stand out like a sore thumb. Warm and rich, just as a great fuzz pedal should be, the power and aggression which this pedal is able to conjure up is mightily impressive. Experimentation is important, as with any effect pedal, but it is at the player's discretion whether to make the fuzztones part of your regular playing, or whether it's an effect to employ sporadically for maximum impact. You may find adding a little to spice up your main clean bass tone adds a little something to fill out your frequency spectrum.

Plectrum players beware: precise picking and good playing technique are advisable, as the pedal processes every nuance of your touch and how

> "WITH SO MANY FUZZES AND DISTORTIONS OUT THERE, IT CAN BE VERY EASY TO GET SWAMPED IN CHOOSING ONE FROM ANOTHER. BUT BE UNDER NO ILLUSION, THIS IS THE REAL DEAL; HARMONICS SING, THERE IS NO LOSS OF BOTTOM END AND THE PEDAL WORKS WELL WITH BOTH PASSIVE AND ACTIVE BASSES"

Photography by Eckie

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £190
Made in | Finland
Features | Blend, Level, Dual, Filter
Dimensions | 110mm x 75mm x 46mm
Power | DC 9v DC adapter
Weight | 431g

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Easy to use, quality tones, very impressive sounding
Minus | A little pricey, but listen to the tonal quality
Overall | A real winner from Darkglass, impressively simple to use but very effective. We're impressed!

BMG RATING

BUILD QUALITY	9/10
SOUND QUALITY	9/10
VALUE	8/10

you attack, damp and manipulate the strings, all of which are conveyed. The sustain, quality of tone and harmonic richness are big plus points in the Duality's favour: try as we might, we couldn't find any settings that sounded plainly extreme or unusable, a rare thing when it comes to fuzz pedals.

With so many fuzzes and distortions out there, it can be very easy to get swamped in choosing one from another. But be under no illusion, this is the real deal; harmonics sing, there is no loss of bottom end and the pedal works well with both passive and active basses. If you want to bask in rich, fuzzy overtones, search out this little number.

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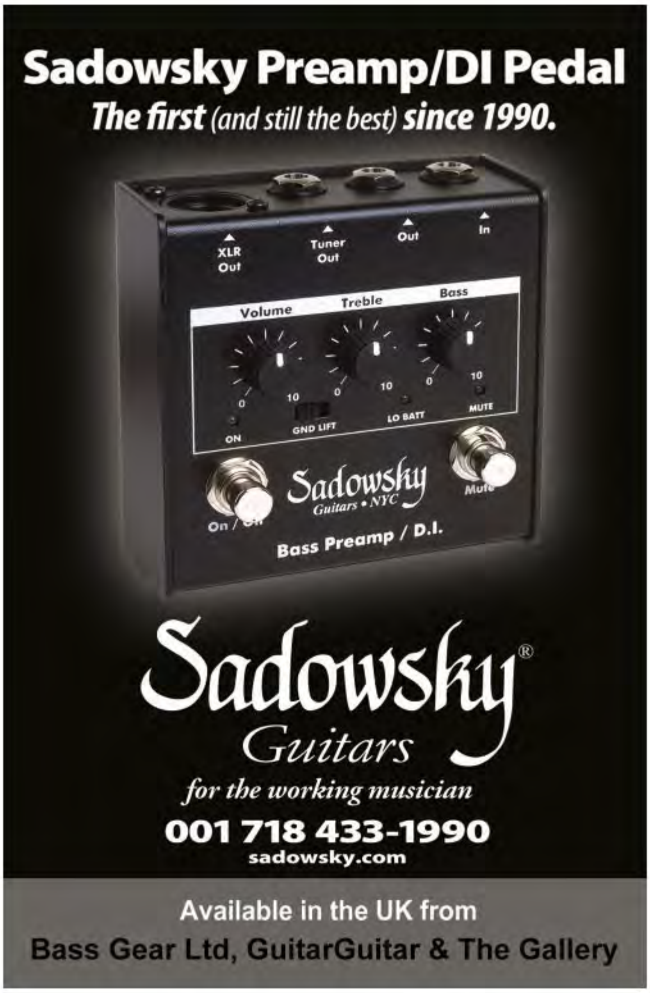
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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.
www.lowendlady.com

ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 72

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 74

Stuart Clayton is a professional bassist and writer with over 20 years of experience in the industry. He runs the bass department at BIMM Bristol and Bassline Publishing, which has published a range of tuition and tab books.
www.stuartclayton.com, www.basslinepublishing.com

STUART CLAYTON INTERMEDIATE THEORY 76

Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at BIMM London.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 78

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 80

Say hello to advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 84

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 86

Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist, with 15 years of touring and 36 solo and collaborative albums to his name. He also lectures at colleges around the world.
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON EFFECTS MAESTRO 88

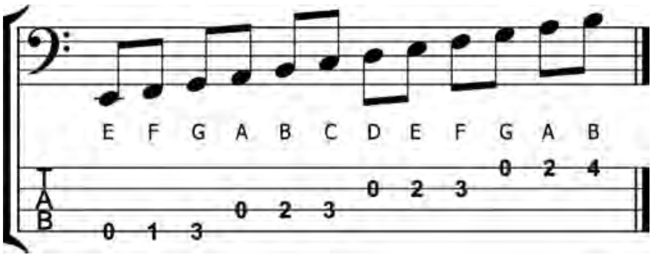
Andy Baxter has established a name as one of the most knowledgeable dealers of vintage basses in the UK. Andy stocks a wide range of highly collectable basses and offers a personal buying experience and excellent customer support.

ANDY BAXTER BAXTER ON BASS 90

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

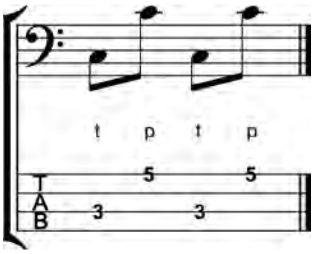
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.



Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

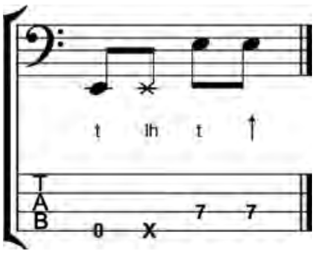
Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES



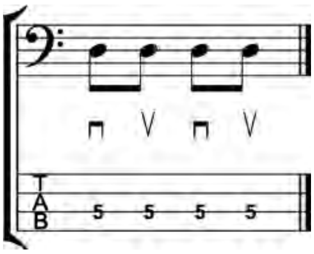
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



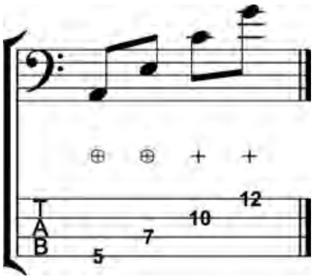
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

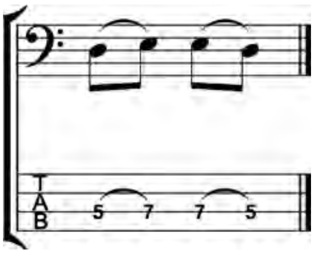
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

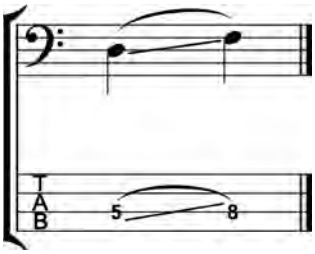
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



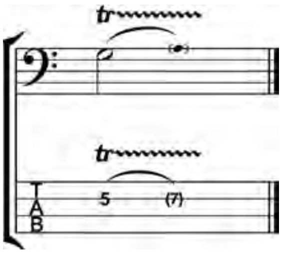
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



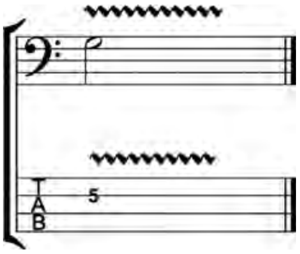
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

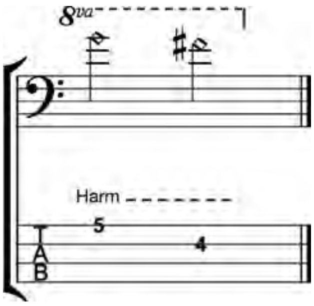
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

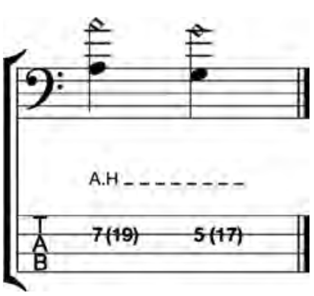
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

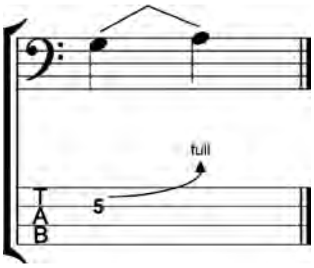
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

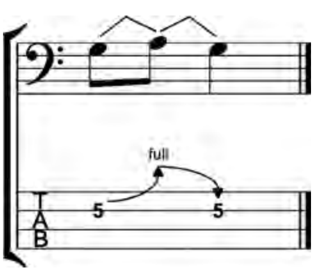
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as BGM's world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazz warrior Ruth on the fine art of soloing on bass

A lot of my students come to me asking about improving their soloing, because it can seem daunting at first, like anything that requires a deep level of knowledge. One solution is to give yourself a set of chords and practise walking bass-lines over it, then learn every possible inversion of each root note on all parts of the fretboard. It's a strict set of rules to follow, where you can easily pick out where your weak points are and focus on them individually. Soloing also requires you to be creative in your practice, which can be difficult if you do it by yourself.

I think the problem mainly lies in not being asked to do it enough in musical institutions and real playing situations. I remember very well being in the same position, having to accompany horn player's solos for hours on end by playing a blues in all different keys: when it got to my turn, I had a single chorus to try out my solo ideas. I know it's my responsibility in this situation to ask the musicians for the space I need to solo, but because of a lack of confidence I didn't do that: as a result, it took me a long time to become comfortable playing a solo in front of an audience. The confidence to take a solo in a playing situation involves taking risks, getting lost, and taking as much time as you need to really get something out of it.

Ask your bandmates for help if you need it, for example by asking another musician to take over a bass-line or outline the chord changes during your solo. Most importantly, a lot of confidence comes from listening to other people when you play, and not getting stuck in your own head.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

IVAN MUNGUIA

Deeds Of Flesh bassist Ivan on getting along in the Trump era

I like to stay on track in this column as much as possible, but this month I'd like to veer off course a bit in the light of November's presidential elections in the USA. I've noticed an incredible amount of nastiness on either side of the political spectrum, as well as a blatant lack of respect on social media between people with differing opinions.

This got me thinking of how respect plays such a big role in being part of a band. Respecting your bandmates begins with making sure you're pulling your own weight in the band; being on time for rehearsal; knowing your parts so you don't waste others' time; not getting so wasted before a gig that you can't play your instrument; helping load in and load out; being in good shape when it's your turn to drive the van on tour; making sure your gear is in good condition… the list goes on. Of course, no-one is perfect: another part of showing respect is cutting people slack when something goes wrong. However, if a band member is not pulling his/her weight on a regular basis it's time to stop and have a conversation about what is not clicking. Far too often, musicians just allow things that are bothering them to fester: instead of talking things through, they act passive-aggressively towards each other, which in turn creates a toxic band environment. This usually culminates in the ultimate showing of disrespect: the firing of a band member without even letting the person know. I've seen it happen to a few people and it always angers me. It shows weakness and lack of character to do this to anyone. I know it can be uncomfortable but having a civil conversation is the right way to address problems.

> "BEING ON TOUR IN A VAN WITH FOUR OTHER PEOPLE REALLY AMPLIFIES THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BANDMEMBERS. IF YOU CAN'T FIND A WAY TO GET ALONG, THEN BEING TWO FEET FROM ONE ANOTHER FOR WEEKS IS GOING TO BE HELL"

Being on tour in a van with four other people really amplifies the nature of the relationships between bandmembers. If you can't find a way to get along, then being two feet from one another for weeks is going to be hell. In short, show your bandmates respect. It'll make your musical experience a whole lot more enjoyable.

www.deedsoffleshmetal.com

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy?'s bass maestro Mike unplugs for a new approach

© www-ashleybird-com

It's always good to have a new challenge to finish the year and as we've decided to do a full band acoustic tour next month, I've been busy prepping the songs. All the material we'll be performing are older tunes, and it's been interesting to revisit them for this revised format. Obviously what we do is normally pretty uptempo, and it was a worry that by taking away the energy the songs might become maudlin or leaden – so now I'm thinking of the set more along the lines of being 'unamplified' as opposed to 'unplugged'. In fact, I'm now thinking it might've been easier to write a batch of new songs on the acoustic specifically for this tour. I feel it could clarify what exactly is needed from the bass if we'd been working from new acoustic ideas.

To explain, there was an initial temptation to just play the original bass parts of the older songs, perhaps with a slightly cleaner sound, but as soon as I started playing them on a proper acoustic bass it became obvious it wasn't going to work. Anyway, I'm glad to report there was indeed a better approach – and by simplifying and reworking the bass-lines, it's ended up being a nice exercise in letting the songs breathe. I've been trying plenty of chordal ideas to fill the sound out, plus some droned pedalling parts which seem to drive some of the more sparse songs along. Simple root notes have been working well, and of course there are those moments when it doesn't seem really suitable to play at all! Without the big rock-out parts, the riff breakdowns and extended instrumental breaks, the arrangements are shorter and in most cases a lot more punchy, which was definitely one of the things we'd hoped to achieve.

We've also decided to document the tour with a short recording of some of the songs as a companion piece: I'll update you on that studio experience in another column. It's been quite a liberating experience: it's like I've spent 26 years in denial, living behind a wall of distortion. I'll definitely be taking this way of working into writing and demoing any new material.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Stop, collaborate and listen to ten-string-wielding legend McKinsey

As we end the year, I'd like to start with something simple – a double stop – and take it in a few different directions. For the sake of easy reference, we'll start with the notes E and G. First and most obviously, this is the beginning of an E minor chord.

But how to use it? Each variation of this will have its own character and it's up to you to explore how or if these will work for you. You can play the open E string and use the 12th or fifth fret harmonic on your G string to powerfully state the tonic, with the higher pitches adding nuance. Playing the E at the seventh fret of your A string and the G on the fifth fret of the D string is very popular as it feels more like a chord, but still retains some of the power of the instrument. Finding each of the spots where you can play this figure in the same octave (the E on the 12th fret of the E string, or at the second fret of the D, to start) will provide you subtle alternatives in timbre because of the thickness of the strings in question and the length of string vibrating.

Taking it up an octave so that you're sounding the E on the 14th fret of the D string and the G at the 12th fret of the G string fills the same role, but you're much more in the range of melodic players at this point. Again, move around the neck to find this same combination in the same octave range but in different spots on the neck for different sonic effect. Do you have the range to go even higher with this pair of notes? You can hold them to dramatically announce the chord or play them as a rhythmic accent. Think of playing them high on the neck the way a horn section might do a stab, to pull your listener's ear in a sudden different direction, or to create tension in the music rather than using them to emphasise a feature.

Explore these possibilities and see what else you can come up with. Next month we will take these same two notes in a different direction entirely. Remember, you can think like a composer or a writer as well as an instrumentalist.

www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

ELLEN O'REILLY

"YOU MAY HAVE HEARD MUSICIANS TALKING ABOUT NUMBERS AS OPPOSED TO CHORD NAMES, SUCH AS I, IV OR V CHORDS. ALL THIS MEANS IS THAT EACH CHORD IN A PARTICULAR KEY IS ALLOCATED A NUMBER"

Beginners' guru Ellen takes us further into chordal territory

Hey, bass buddies! Last month we looked chords derived from the harmonised major scale, and how these are placed in various orders to create chord progressions. Most pop and rock songs are built from chord progressions, so it helps us to learn lots of songs quickly or get through a gig if we know how to jot this info down. We also took a look at how to create chord charts for contemporary pop or rock songs.

We can also use roman numerals to identify what chord comes next in a particular key. This way you can transpose (change the key of) a song from its original key to any other major key. For example, if you're in the key of F major, your I (1) chord is F maj7, your II (2) is G min7 and so on.

The 1 chord	**I**	**maj7**
The 2 chord	**II**	**min7**
The 3 chord	**III**	**min7**
The 4 chord	**IV**	**maj7**
The 5 chord	**V**	**7**
The 6 chord	**VI**	**min7**
The 7 chord	**VII**	**min7b5**

You may have heard musicians talking about numbers as opposed to chord names, such as I, IV or V chords. All this means is that each chord in a particular key is allocated a number. The I, IV and V chords in the key of G would be G maj7, C maj7 and D7, and if you were in the key of B they would be B maj7, E maj7 and F#7. Try using this method to find out all the chords for all the major key signatures, giving them a roman numeral from 1 to 7 and then placing them in different orders to create your own chord progressions.

Roman numerals are also very handy when you're in a jam setting: a musician may call out, "A blues I, IV, V in E." You'll then know that the chords they want you to play under are E maj7, A maj7 and B7. If they call out for a I, V, VI, IV in D, you would play D maj7, A7, B min7 and G maj7.

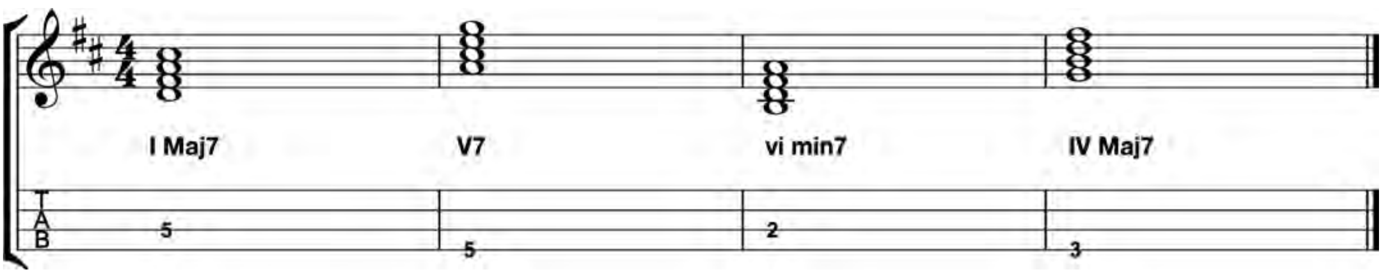
A very popular chord progression is I, V, VI, IV, which in the key of D major becomes similar to a U2 classic, 'With Or Without You'.

Verse and Chorus:
||: D Maj7 | A7 | B min7 | G Maj7 :|| *repeat till end*

In this example I've written the chord qualities, meaning if they are major or minor. You can see the basic chord in the example on the stave with the bass root notes in tab below. Try playing along with this progression by highlighting the roots: be sure to play while either tapping your foot or using a metronome to count out each of the bars. Then expand on the bass-line by adding passing notes between the chords or by changing the rhythm slightly. In the key of D major you have two sharps, F# and C#, so be sure to play those notes and not the natural F and C.

Create your own bass-line for this progression using triads, arpeggios and pentatonic scales – have fun!

EXAMPLE 1



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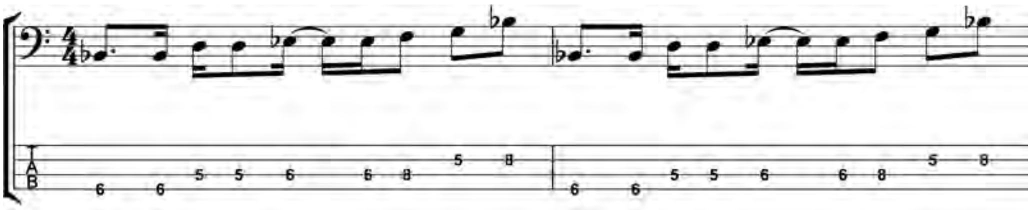
PAUL GEARY

Chords in the higher register, explored by Commander Geary

This month I would like to explore playing some simple chord shapes on the bass above the 12th fret – also known as the dusty bit! It's always an inspiration to me to see exactly what the bass guitar is capable of. Its function will always be fundamental to the rhythm section: however, there is nothing stopping us being as melodic and harmonic as any other instrument. If our understanding and knowledge of a chord stops at knowing the root, we are limiting our own growth on the instrument, and missing out on some great possibilities in playing, and ultimately constructing, bass-lines.

EXAMPLE 1



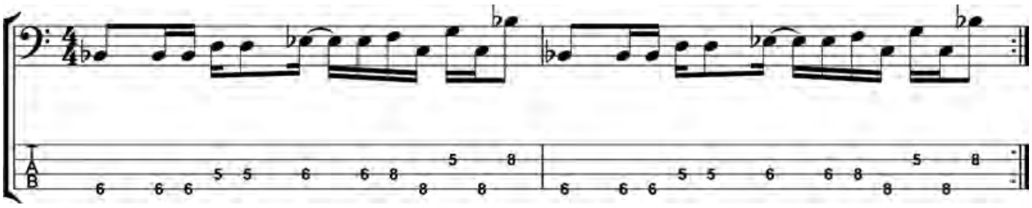
Remember that all of these examples are to be played above the 12th fret. I have written the chord stacks on the stave down the octave rather than on ledger lines, purely for ease of reading. The symbol 8va tells us to play the notes up the octave. This is indicated on the tablature.

The first chord can be played over a G minor 7th. We start with the root of G (15th fret, E string) followed by the minor 7th interval played on F (15th fret D string) and finally the minor 3rd interval Bb (15th fret G string). The Bb could be played lower at the 13th fret of the A string: however, the chord would sound a little muddy. For this reason I have tweaked the inversion of the chord stack on the stave, and put the Bb up the octave. It sounds a lot brighter there.

Try playing the chord with the thumb of your plucking hand striking the E string and then your first and second fingers simultaneously playing the D and G strings. Your fretting hand fingers will need to hold down the notes of the chord at the same time. Your first finger will hold down G, and your second finger holds the F, followed by the third finger on the Bb.

Make sure you get the same attack and velocity when you strike the strings. It is vital that all the notes are played at the same time and heard at the same volume with the same tone.

EXAMPLE 2



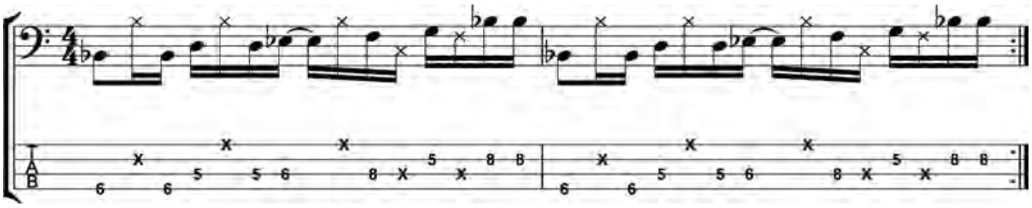
In this example we move onto a C dominant 7th chord. As above, we start with the root of C on the 15th fret of the A string, but this time play the major 3rd interval E on the 14th fret of the D string. The minor 7th Bb is played on the 15th fret of the G string. It is a different inversion and shape to the last example, but sounds brighter because the root is played on the A string. Keep your fretting hand and plucking hand fingers the same as the last example, making sure all of the notes are played at the same time. Use your second finger of your fretting hand to play the root of C, followed by your first finger playing E, and finally your 3rd finger playing the Bb.

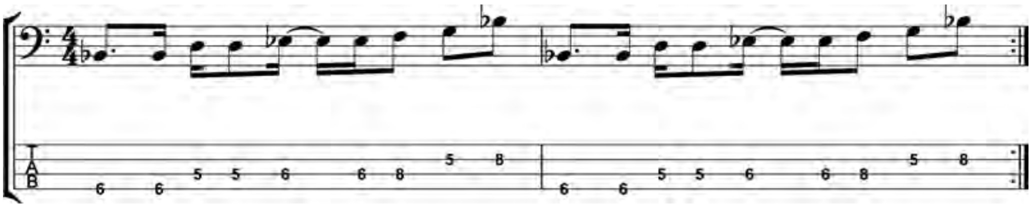
> "REMEMBER THAT ALL OF THESE EXAMPLES ARE TO BE PLAYED ABOVE THE 12TH FRET. I HAVE WRITTEN THE CHORD STACKS ON THE STAVE DOWN THE OCTAVE RATHER THAN ON LEDGER LINES, PURELY FOR EASE OF READING. THE SYMBOL 8VA TELLS US TO PLAY THE NOTES UP THE OCTAVE. THIS IS INDICATED ON THE TABLATURE"

EXAMPLE 3 AND 4

Let's move the root of the next two chords around and play Fmi7 and Bb7. Remember to keep the shapes exactly the same as the previous two examples, with your fretting hand in the same position. This time, try playing the chord shapes with the first finger of your plucking hand striking the root, and then moving quickly to play the next two notes of the chord with the same two fingers. It may take a little practice to get this particular technique sounding just right, but stick with it and the effort you put in will pay off.

Try to keep a steady pulse while playing the following examples. As you begin to get more familiar with the actual chord shape, your fingers should adapt quite quickly to the various positions, and in turn this will help you to move through the progression smoothly and effectively with good tone and meter. The key is repetitive practice of the various chord shapes, which will help to build vital muscle memory.





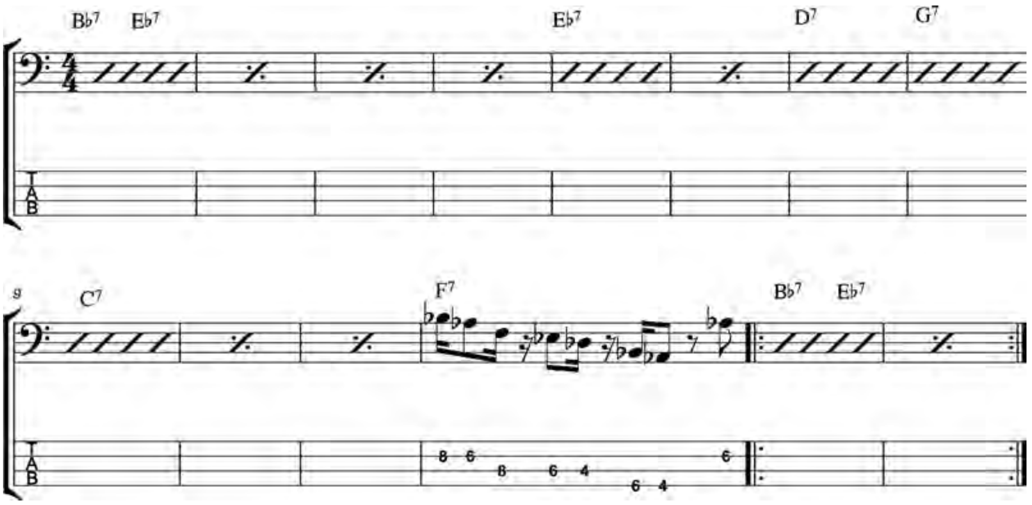
EXAMPLE 5

Example 5 starts with a Gmi7. Use your first finger of your fretting hand to play the root of G, your second finger on the F and your third finger on the Bb. Make sure you hit all the strings cleanly with the same velocity: this will help the chord to project and sound full. Next is the C7: the root of C should be played with the second finger of the fretting hand, followed by the first finger on the 14th fret of the D string playing the E. Finally, let the third finger play the Bb on the 15th fret of the G string.

Try switching between the two chords simultaneously. This chord change should become quite familiar as your fingers are programmed to the shape. Use your thumb plus the first and second fingers of your picking hand to strike the strings at the same time: this, combined with your fretting hand, should deliver a clean-sounding chord.

The next chord is an F7. Put your first finger on the 13th fret of the E string, playing the F note, followed by the second finger on the 13th fret of the D string playing the Eb, and finally the third finger on the 14th fret of the G string, playing the A note which is the major 3rd of F7. Notice that the major 3rd A is played higher to get a much cleaner sound.

The last chord is Bb7. Use the exact same shape as the C7 but start on the root of Bb at the 13th fret of the A string. On the third bar of the second line, you will notice an Fmi7. Again, use the exact same shape as the Gmi7 but start on the root of the Fmi7 at the 13th fret of the E string.



STUART CLAYTON

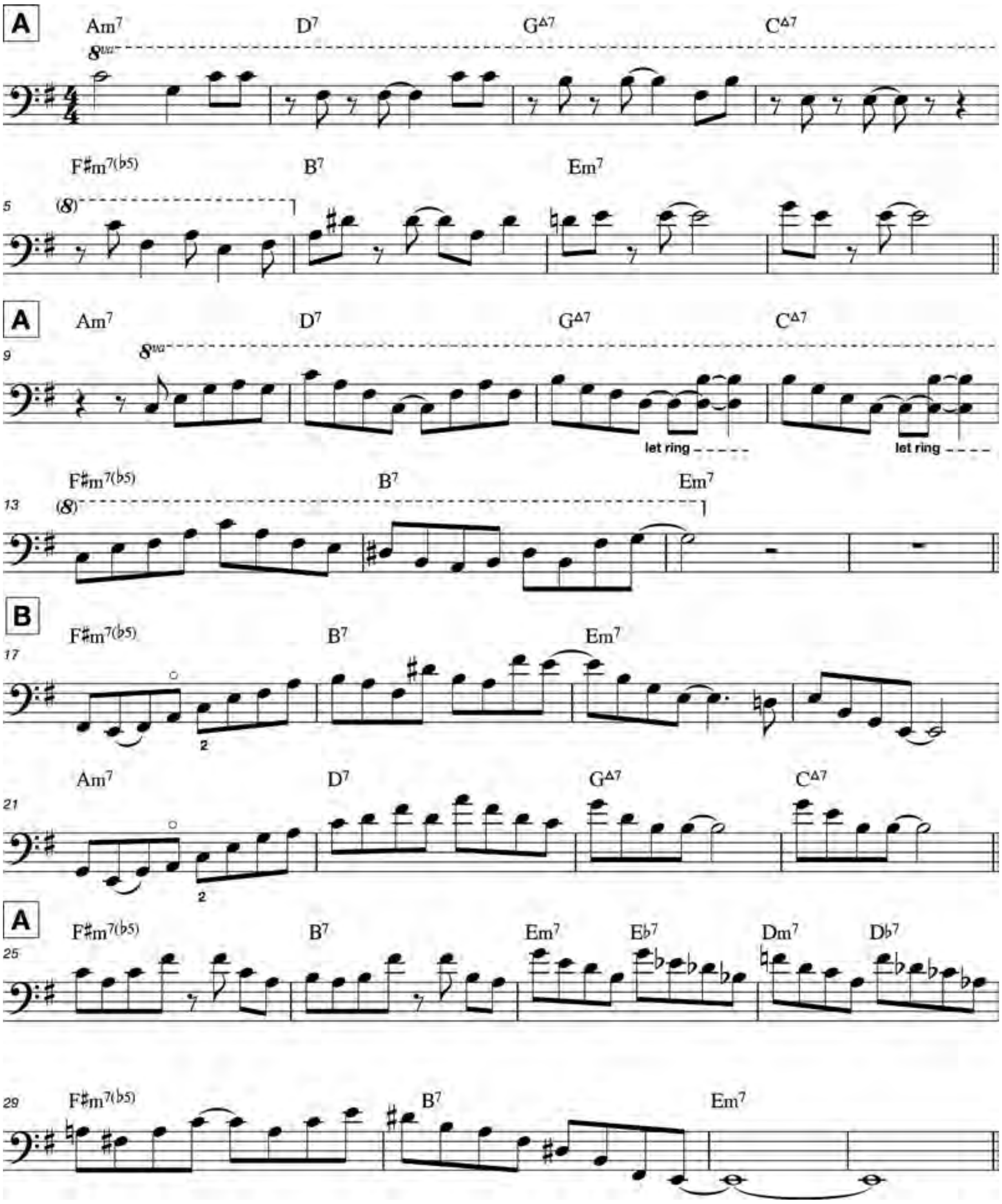
Stu continues his quest to teach you essential soloing skills. Saddle up!

Welcome to the latest instalment in my series covering basic soloing techniques. Over the past few issues we've been using arpeggios to write and improvise very basic solos over common jazz chord progressions. This month we continue this approach, but over a much longer form.

Last month we soloed over a common jazz form – the 12-bar jazz blues. This time we'll be using the chord changes to a very well known jazz standard. This is a 32-bar form (common in jazz) and follows an AABA structure. As before, remember that at the moment we're painting with a very limited palette: just chord tones, nothing else. It's difficult to be creative with so few options, but the point of this exercise is not to improvise the most amazing solo ever, but to learn to play using only chord tones. Doing so will ensure that your solos work with the chord progression and reflect the overall harmony.

In the coming months we'll look at additional tools that will help you make your ideas more interesting. At the moment, the solos that you should be writing or improvising will be little more than experiments with chord tones. The piece we'll be tackling this issue is in the key of G major. Most of the chords used are diatonic (meaning that they belong in the key), although there are one or two that are non-diatonic. Below I've written all of the chords out as arpeggios. Before attempting to use them, I recommend that you experiment with playing each one over one and two octaves, using as many different parts of the fingerboard as you can. This is quite a lot of work in itself, so I recommend adding it into your regular practice routine.

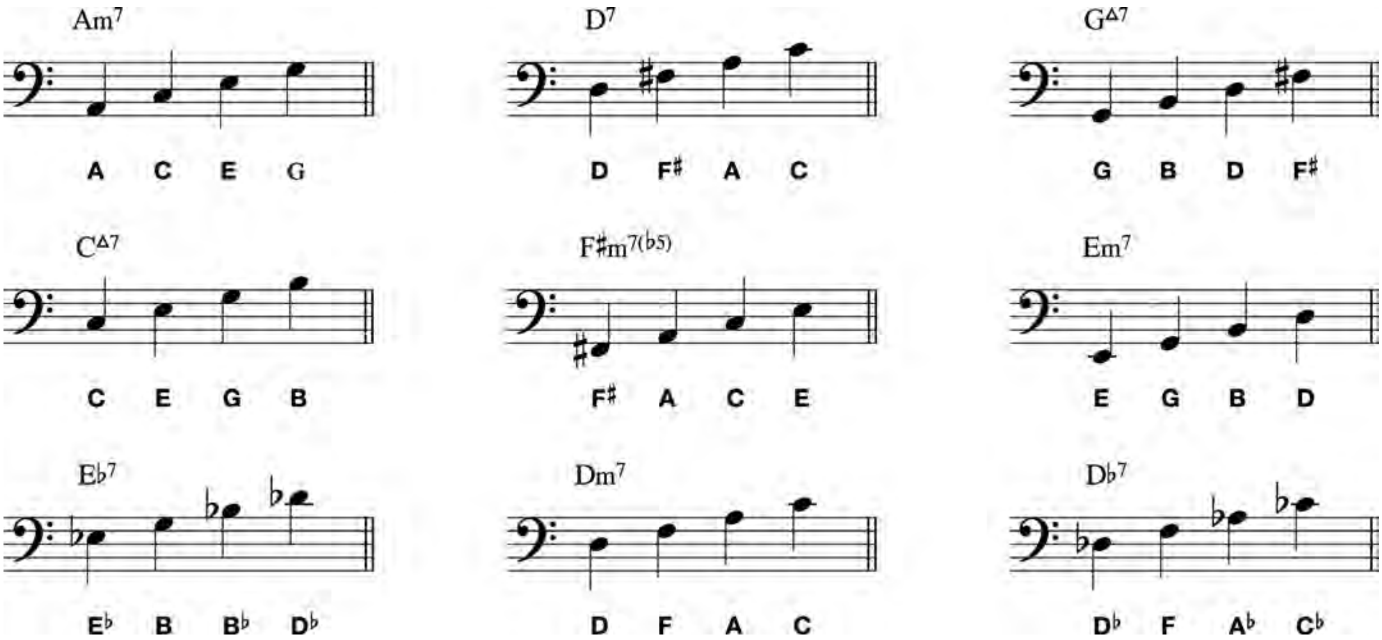
EXAMPLE 1



Let's take a look at the solo itself. Below are some points of interest:

- The solo starts off slow. Simple rhythms are used: minims, crotchets and basic quaver phrases. Note that the first five bars are played an octave higher than written.
- For the second A section (bar nine onwards) the solo starts to get a little busier. The phrase in bars nine and

ARPEGGIOS



> "IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE CREATIVE WITH SO FEW OPTIONS, BUT THE POINT OF THIS EXERCISE IS NOT TO IMPROVISE THE MOST AMAZING SOLO EVER, BUT TO LEARN TO PLAY USING ONLY CHORD TONES. DOING SO WILL ENSURE THAT YOUR SOLOS WORK WITH THE CHORD PROGRESSION AND REFLECT THE OVERALL HARMONY"

ten can be played using the finger-per-fret technique in one position: start with your second finger on the C at the fifteenth fret of the A string and the whole two-bar phrase will fall right under your fingers.

■ In bars 11 and 12 a repeating phrase is used. In bar 11, the notes are B, G, F# and D, the chord tones from a Gmaj7 chord. After playing the D, play the B a 6th above it as written and let the two notes ring together to create a chordal effect. This same phrase is used in the next bar with the notes altered to fit the Cmaj7 chord: B, G, E and C. Again, after playing the C, play the B, which is now a major 7th higher. Let these notes ring together as well.

■ After remaining in the upper register for sixteen bars, we head to the lower register for the B section. Switching to a different register is a nice way to get some contrast into your solo – indeed, it's crucial here as we have very few note choices to work with! Note that A in bar 17 has a small 'o' above it. This means that you should use an open string. Doing so will allow you to position shift, putting your second finger on the C at the eighth fret of the E-string, as indicated. This idea is used again in bar 21.

■ Note the use of a repeated phrase with subtly altered notes in bars 23 and 24 – again, this has happened because Gmaj7 and Cmaj7 share the notes G and B.

■ Another repeating phrase with similar note choices is used in bars 25 and 26.

■ In bars 27 and 28 there are a series of descending chords, a semitone apart. The first two chords share a common tone: G. For the Em7 chord, we descend through the arpeggio from G – G-E-D-B. Then, for the Eb7, we descend again from the G – G-Eb-Db-Bb. The same approach is reused for the Dm7 and Db7 chords.

■ The solo ends with a descending B7 arpeggio phrase that takes us all the way back down to the low E – a neat way to end the solo.

Your task is to learn to play this solo. Once you can play it, try doing it with a backing track. I often use the iRealbook app for this, which contains practice loops and chord charts for hundreds of well known jazz standards. Alternatively, play this with a guitarist or piano player. Once you are comfortable with this solo, the idea is that you will begin to come up with your own ideas. Try to stick to chord tones for now – I'm hoping that you can see that it's possible to do quite a lot with a very limited set of notes!

See you next time, when we'll be looking at ways to make your solos more varied. Until then...

ROB STATHAM

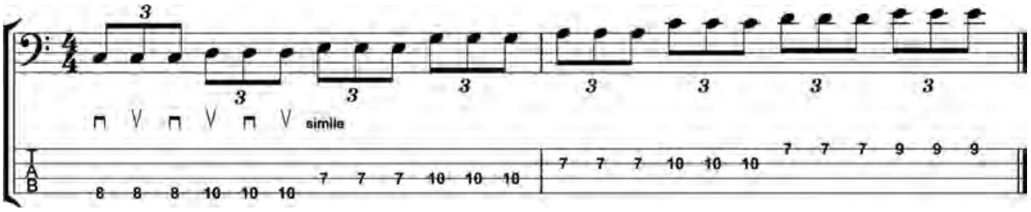
Double thumbing explored more deeply, with the esteemed Statham

We looked at some double thumbing exercises a while back, mainly in the context of even patterns of notes, so let's look at some patterns where we're playing triplets or odd numbers of notes on each string. The challenge here is to keep an alternating down-up pattern going: there are some useful strategies we can use to ensure we can do this. It's worth mentioning, by the way, that you could equally profitably practise these exercises with a pick, as the principle is much the same – double thumbing being rather like using our thumb as a plectrum.

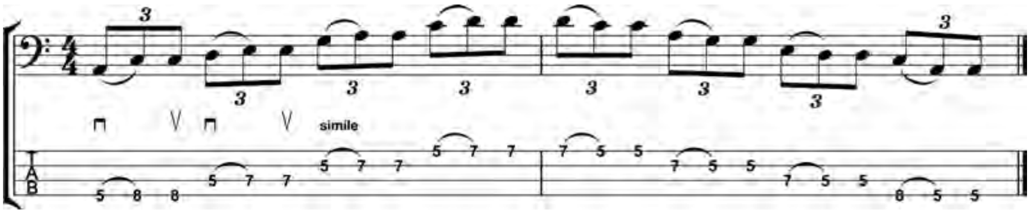
Example 1 is simply a C major pentatonic scale across all four strings, starting at the eighth fret on the E string and carrying on to the third above the octave on the G string. Here I've written a triplet group for each note in the scale, and as we're playing two notes of the scale per string that means we're playing six notes per string, an even number. This means that we can comfortably maintain an alternating pattern as we play through the exercise.

The point to note, however, is that the direction of the thumb

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



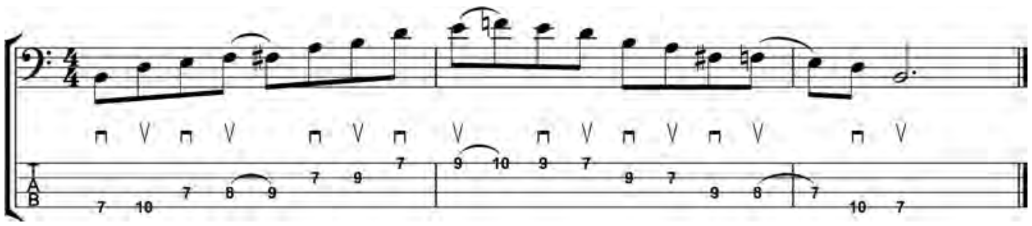
changes with each triplet group. So, it's down-up-down for the first group and then up-down-up for the second, at which point we cross to the next string and it's the same again. I have only written the ascending form of the exercise to demonstrate the pattern, but I recommend you practise the descending form too – the pattern is the same.

It gets a little less obvious with **example 2**, an A minor pentatonic pattern across all four strings. Here, you'll see from the tab, we're playing three notes per string, which means that as we cross to the next string our thumb would be moving in the wrong direction to comfortably maintain an alternating pattern if we thumb each note. It's possible to play the exercise this way, effectively playing two consecutive down thumbs, rather like a guitar sweep picking technique, but it's tricky to maintain an even attack and so we might wish to look for another approach.

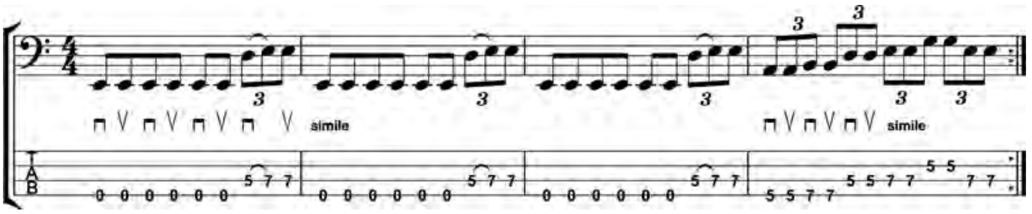
A good solution here is to make use of a hammer-on, meaning that on each string we play down thumb, hammer-on, up thumb, which has the effect of enabling us to maintain the alternating pattern on each string. When we play the descending form we can use a pull-off rather than a hammer-on which has the same result. This lets us keep the regular thumb pattern throughout the exercise, playing the same pattern on each string, ascending and descending. By incorporating hammer-ons and pull-offs we can usually find a way to keep the alternating pattern going, regardless of the number of notes we're playing on each string.

This sometimes requires a little thought as to how to deploy our hammer-ons and pull-offs, especially in a situation where there are an irregular pattern of notes across the strings, combining odd and even numbers. I illustrate this in **example 3** which is a B blues scale riff across all four strings.

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



> "A GOOD SOLUTION HERE IS TO MAKE USE OF A HAMMER-ON, MEANING THAT ON EACH STRING WE PLAY DOWN THUMB, HAMMER-ON, UP THUMB, WHICH HAS THE EFFECT OF ENABLING US TO MAINTAIN THE ALTERNATING PATTERN ON EACH STRING"

You'll see from the tab that this combines odd and even numbers of notes on each string. So, there are two notes on the E string; three on the A string; two on the D string; and five on the G string.

After the five notes on the G string we descend back down, again playing two notes on the D string, three on the A string, and finally two on the E string. Here we can comfortably maintain an alternating pattern with a little consideration. So, we will play down then up on the E string; down, up, hammer-on on the A string; down, up on the D string; and down, up, hammer-on, down, up on the G string. When descending we'll play a pull-off rather than a hammer-on on the A string, finally finishing as we started, with a down thumb and up thumb on the E string.

When combining these odd and even patterns we need to think ahead and work out how best to deploy our hammer-ons and pull-offs, but once we have a strategy worked out it tends to sit quite nicely and feels pretty comfortable. It's also true that the more you practise these sort of ideas, the more quickly the solutions tend to present themselves.

Example 4 is a shuffle bass-line where you can use some of these ideas. It's a four-bar pattern where the first three bars are a repeated one-bar idea: on the fourth bar, there is a triplet fill. As you can see, shuffle eighth notes sit very nicely with an alternating down-up pattern, but on beat four there is a triplet figure. However, by making use of a hammer-on, it's easy enough to maintain the down-up pattern throughout the whole bar. This makes the repeated one bar idea comfortable to play, keeping the same thumb pattern through the bar.

On the fourth beat there is a triplet fill which has the notes grouped in two, thus creating a polyrhythmic effect. However, it's fairly easy to maintain an alternating pattern as we're playing an even number of notes per string. Here, as in **example 1**, the direction of the thumb flips round for each triplet group, from down-up-down to up-down-up, the added twist being that this happens as we cross the string, so the first note of the second triplet group is played on the E string, the second and third on the A string.

As you can see, by making use of hammer-ons and pull-offs it's usually possible to maintain an alternating pattern with the thumb, or, for that matter, with a pick. Try these exercises and then explore the concept with your own ideas or bass-lines you already know – you'll find it starts to happen more intuitively the more you do it.

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FRANC O'SHEA

Big Franc examines chords made up of harmonics. Tread carefully!

Over my next few columns I will be continuing to look at playing harmonics on the electric bass, and exploring how this natural phenomenon can enhance the scope of your playing. Last month, I started off by examining single note harmonics and this month I will begin looking at the formation of chords.

Apart from when used in unaccompanied compositions, harmonics are probably most often employed by bassists as chords that are occasionally thrown in to add a little colour and spice to bass-lines. As with all playing, the key is not to overdo it and to understand where a technique will and won't work within the musical context in which you're performing. If there is already a chord player in the band such as a guitarist or keyboard player, you don't want to be unnecessarily standing on their toes, so harmonics must be used judiciously and tastefully.

Back in 1996 I co-wrote and recorded a track called 'Freedom' with the acid jazz/trip-hop band URUBU for Tonic Records. It featured a bass-line that employed

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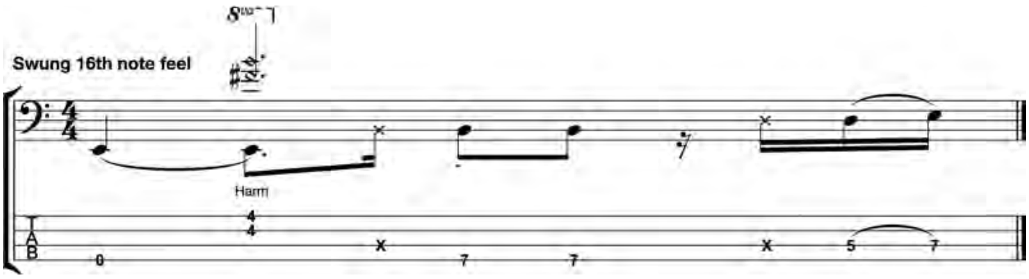
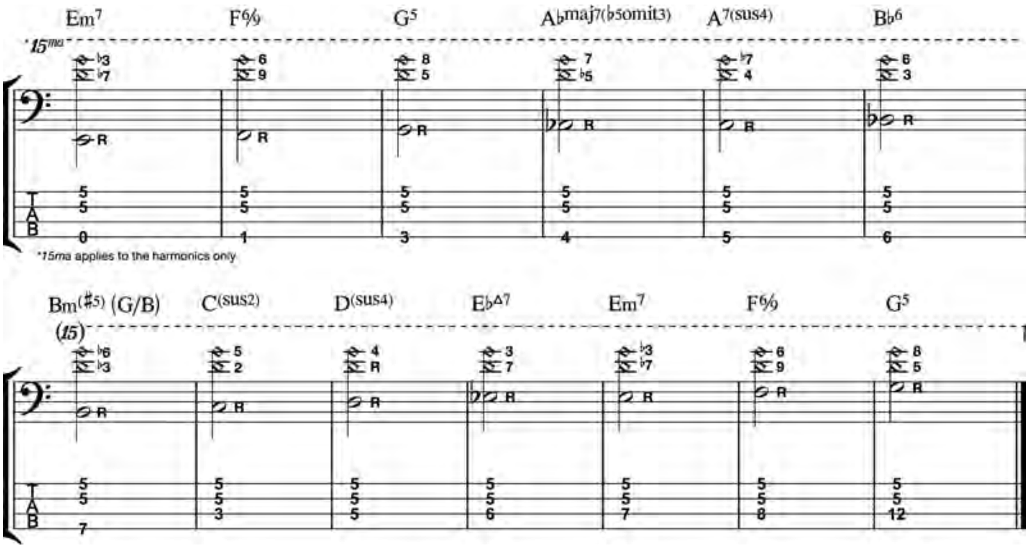
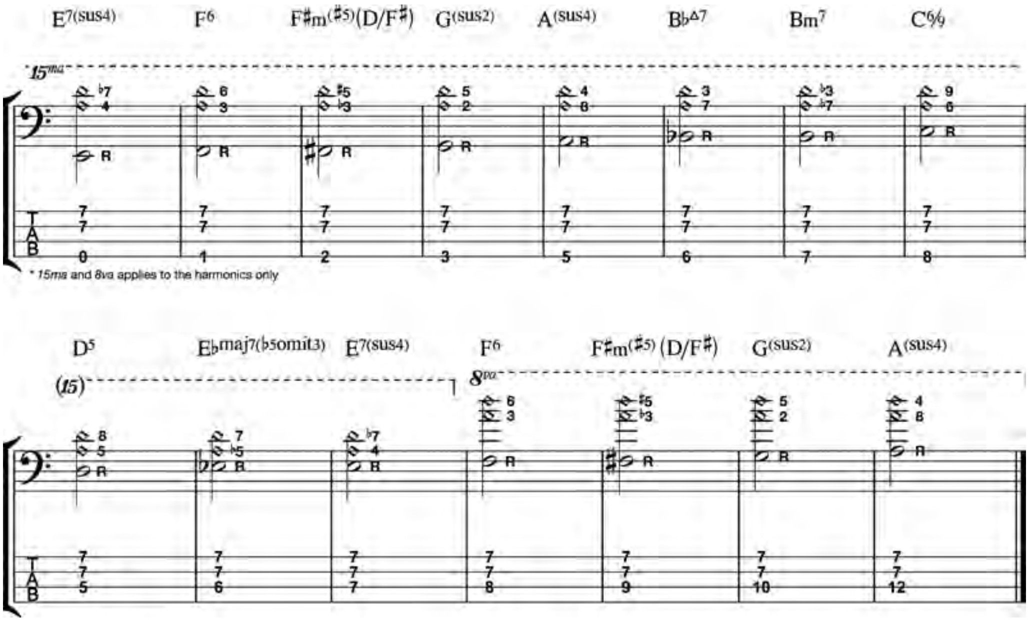


EXAMPLE 2



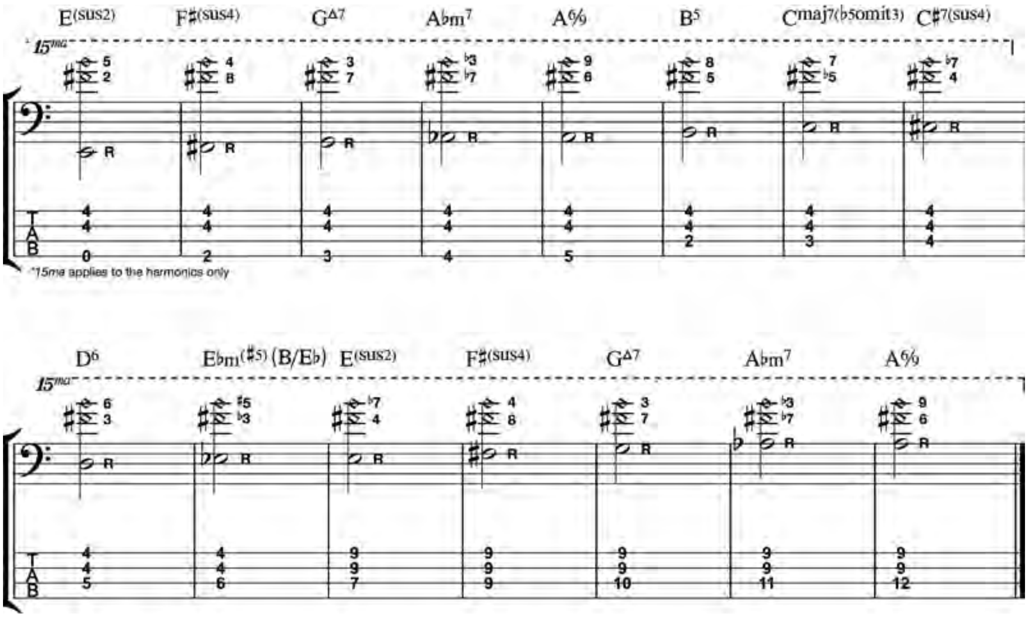
*15ma applies to the harmonics only

EXAMPLE 3



* 15ma and 8va applies to the harmonics only

EXAMPLE 4



an Emin7 harmonics chord. The intro starts out with the bass figure shown in **example 1** before the rest of the band kicks in. Once the rest of the band comes in, this bass figure, including the harmonics, remains the same throughout the song, acting as a foundation for the rap, DJ scratching, electric piano, rhythm guitar, flute, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone and drum parts that are included in the track. Even with such an array of instruments, this simple bass-line is integral to the feel of the whole song.

Simple harmonics chords are easy to use on the spot to add colour to your bass playing, or, like with the line shown in the first example, can help expand the sonic territory of your bass-lines. **Example 2** demonstrates how we can use harmonics in combination with fretted notes to create and imply some interesting and often sophisticated chords. By using the same two harmonics, in this case at the fifth fret of both the D and G strings, we can get a whole variety of chords by framing the harmonics in a different light by only moving the fretted root note.

The chords shown in **examples 2, 3** and **4** include both the chord's name and the interval name for each note. The root notes appear in ascending order, and only roots that create the most palatable chords are included. (You could experiment with other root notes, though, if you want some more dissonant-sounding chords.) Obviously not every note from the chord name is included in the voicings shown. The names have been chosen firstly for convenience – for example, every note that has been omitted is not included in the chord name, as too many 'omit' suffixes would make the names overlong – and secondly, the included notes are the main tones that create the colour of the chord type shown.

The maj7b5 chords include 'omit 3rd' as a suffix in brackets, as since there is no 3rd, they could quite easily be used with min/maj7b5 or min/maj7#4 chord types that can be derived from the 4th mode of the harmonic major scale, which is the Lydian b3 mode (1, 2, b3, #4, 5, 6, 7), or the Hungarian Gypsy minor scale (1, 2, b3, #4, 5, b6, 7).

Since harmonic chords are less common and not all the harmonic note names are always obvious, I have kept all the chord names as root position rather than using inversion names. There is an obvious inversion here that replicates itself across **examples 2, 3** and **4**: a major triad in first inversion. I have chosen to call this a min#5 (more appropriately a minAddb6 no 5th) chord to provide a coherence with the other chord names, whose root notes are all fretted notes on either the E or A strings. I have given the inverted name in brackets for clarification.

I hope you find this method of creating a whole array of chords from just moving the root note helpful, especially when it comes to building up your vocabulary of harmonic chords. Next month I will be looking at some more complex harmonic chords. Until then...

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PHIL MANN

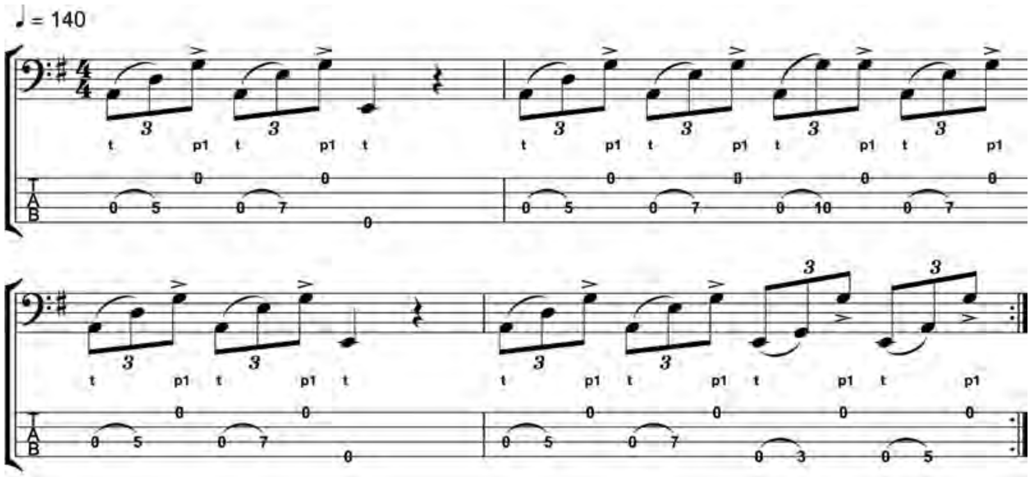
Feel like your practice routine is stuck on a loop? Bass therapist Mann has some tips

All too often I hear bassists referring to being stuck in a rut with their playing. I have often wondered what it is that really causes this, as more commonly it doesn't appear to be newer, more zealous players who have to deal with it. In my experience, 'rut syndrome' is often more apparent in established instrumentalists who have been studying for a period, yet somehow find themselves low on inspiration and motivation.

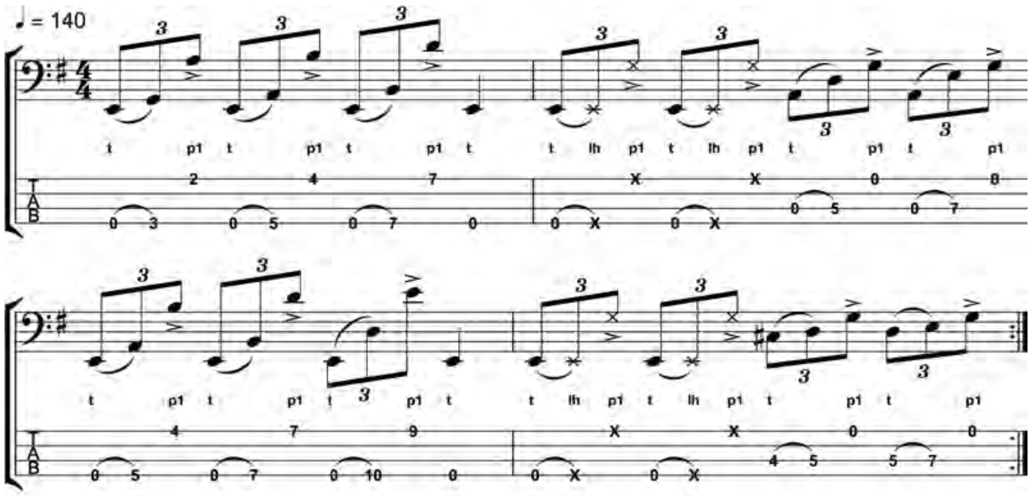
Focusing on new subject matter is all too often prescribed as a way to cure the 'rut': however, this isn't always the best solution. So many practising instrumentalists are taught that the answer to development and progress is always new information. For example, once you've studied triads, look at 7th arpeggios, then study pentatonic scales before taking a look at modes, and so on. Perhaps it's innovative thinking that's needed rather than a deeper mine of information to work from.

In the last few instalments of this column, we have been studying in some depth the sort of semiquaver triplets found in

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3

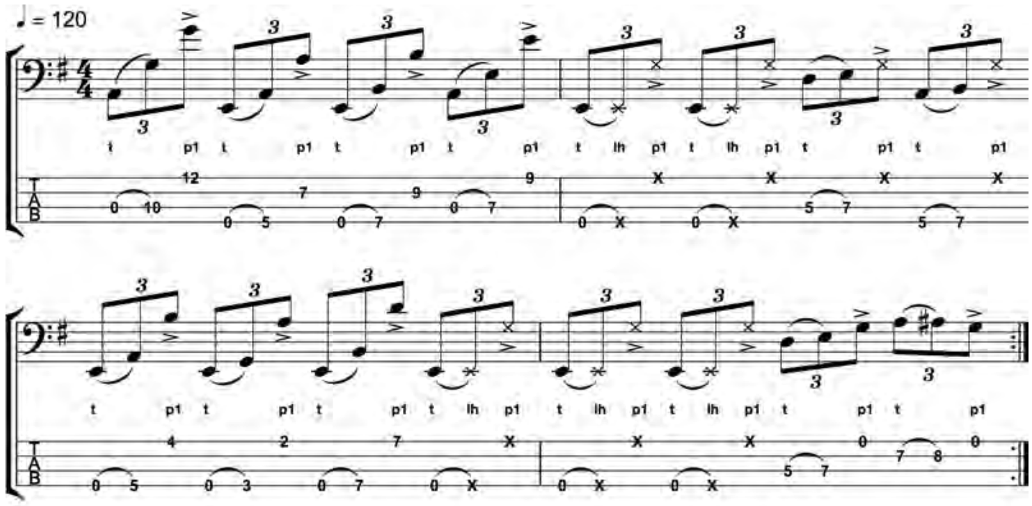


figure 1. The obvious train of thought would be to move on and find a new subject matter, right? No. What we're going to do now is further deepen our understanding of the technique by applying permutation methodology.

Figure 1 uses a combination of left and right hands to execute a semiquaver triplet. However, the following exercises use two different factors in an attempt to broaden and strengthen the understanding of the initial technique. The first, found in **example 1**, is a simple move, placing the semiquaver triplet on the offbeat rather than on the beat itself. The second is to apply a permutation in an attempt to change the delivery method of the triplet. Differing from **figure 1**, this example uses an initial thumb strike succeeded by two plucks (p1, p2) to create the triplet.

Example 2 persists with the triplet delivery devised in **example 1**, using the same thumb, pluck (p1), pluck (p2) methodology. However, in this example, two other components also become apparent that continue to apply to the remainder of this month's exercises. The first is the rhythmic information found on beat one of the first bar that will continue to establish an underlying groove and an air of familiarity in all of the succeeding patterns. The second component also showcased is the melodic phrase found at the end of bar four: this lick has been primarily produced using a Dorian vocabulary and is influenced by the great Marcus Miller.

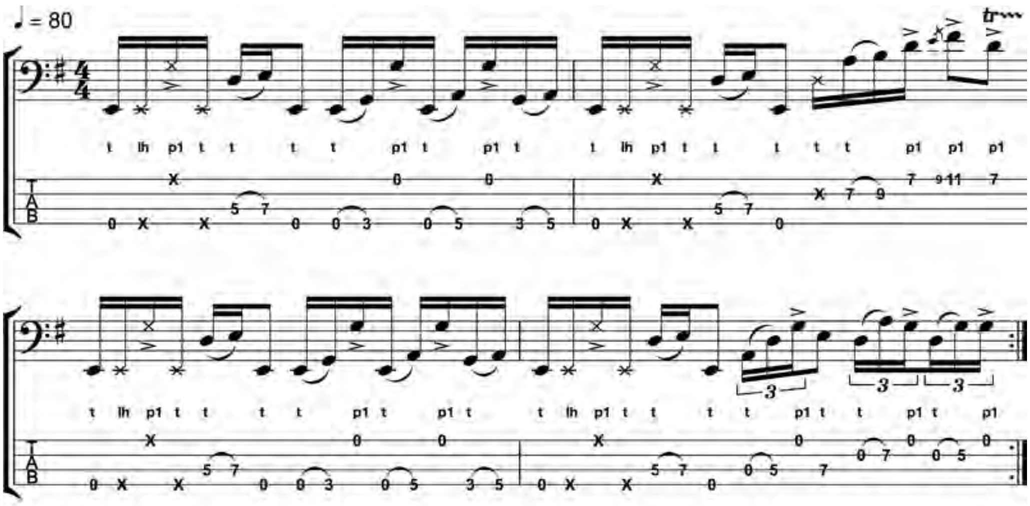
Example 3 once again features the Dorian phrase found in the final bar of **example 2**, this time also delivered in a higher octave. You may find bar three particularly taxing, as our semiquaver triplets now appear on all of the first three beats of the bar.

Example 4 uses an element of ostinato to create an air of call and response to the groove. Hopefully you will notice that bars one and three are essentially composed of the same genetics: once again they use two octaves as per **example 3**, but on this occasion you will also need to be aware of a slight variation in the articulation that's present. **Example 4** also takes the delivery of our semiquaver triplets to an entirely new level.

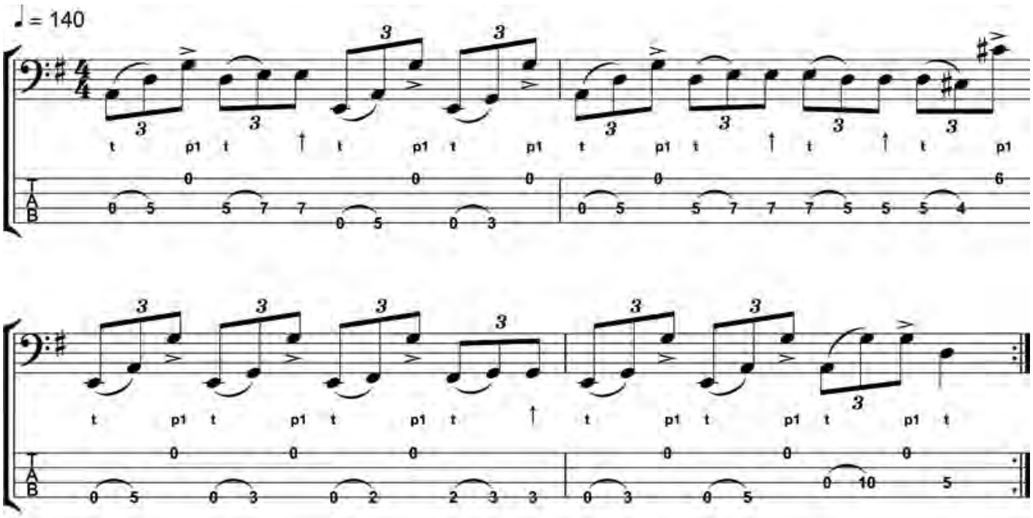
Take a look at the final bar and you'll notice that instead of using either of the 'thumb, left-hand, thumb' or 'thumb, pluck (p1), pluck (p2)' approaches already encountered, this time we are confronted with an entirely new delivery method. In order to cleanly execute the melodic information found on beat one of bar four, you first need to strike the fundamental and allow your thumb to come to rest on the fretboard directly beneath the string. You will then find yourself in an ideal position to be able to deliver the first of the triplet notes as an upstroke. The remaining two pitches are then generated through the application of double plucking. It's the same rhythmic delivery, just a different approach.

That's it for this month. Until next time, practise hard!

EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



"FOCUSING ON NEW SUBJECT MATTER IS ALL TOO OFTEN PRESCRIBED AS A WAY TO CURE THE 'RUT'"

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DAVID ETHERIDGE

Thematic approaches to solos, with double bass maestro David Etheridge

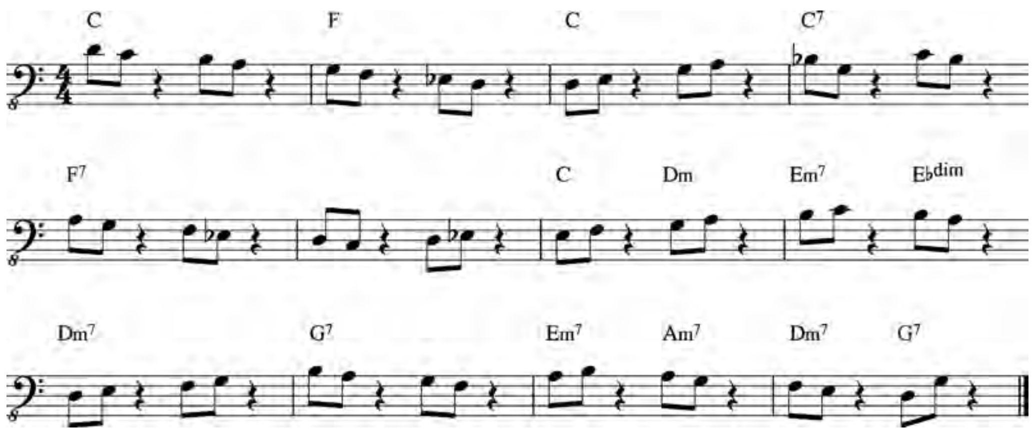
This month, let's look at some more approaches to solos. We've seen quotes and chord tones, and general melodic invention. This time, let's investigate more musical building blocks as the basis for our flights of fancy.

Now while some folks go on about playing modal scales over chords and constructing a solo that way, let me offer you the following analogy: as music is a language, and the notes we are using are the letters of that language, then to simply play scales and modes is to only express a range of the alphabet rather than creating musical 'words' and 'phrases' that actually make sense. So a modal solo runs the danger of being the musical equivalent of 'abcdefghij-jklmno-abcd-defg' or whatnot. If we look at simple ideas, then they can be developed to an almost infinite degree.

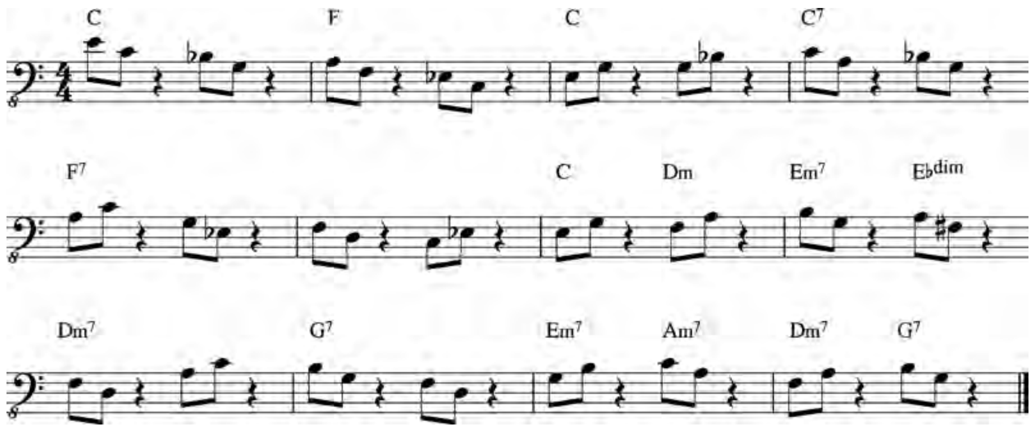
Let's get back to the approach for double bass. We can take a very simple phrase as the start of a solo. It could be part of the melody itself, or a nice riff that fits the chord changes. Victor Wooten shows in his *Groove Workshop* DVD how you can solo just on one note alone, using different note lengths, rhythms, articulations and spaces to good effect. Let's go further and build ideas from first principles. Try a two-note phrase using major and minor 2nds. **Example 1** shows this over a 12-bar progression. It's both simple and effective if you like to investigate playing less and exploring spaces in your solos.

Use the same principle again, but with major and minor 3rds this time. **Example 2** shows the idea. Now obviously you can continue this and try 4ths, 5ths, 6ths and 7ths for thematic ideas, and even invert them, as is the case with 3rds/6ths and 2nds/7ths. As with all simple ideas, they can be expanded to your heart's content. In fact, you might even try deliberately limiting yourself in your choice of notes just to see how far you can take any concept.

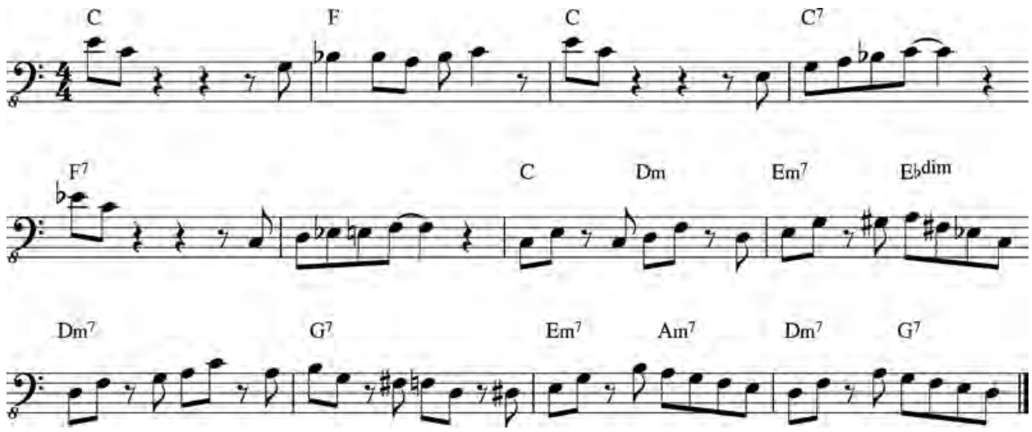
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



Now let's develop it a little more, taking our basic idea and then answering it with another phrase. **Example 3** shows the basic major and minor 3rd phrase, answered by another phrase. Where the chords move, we can outline the harmonic movement and still have a solo line. Note that the last four bars comprise two-bar phrases: you can take the phrase and adjust it to the chord progression (III-VI-II-V).

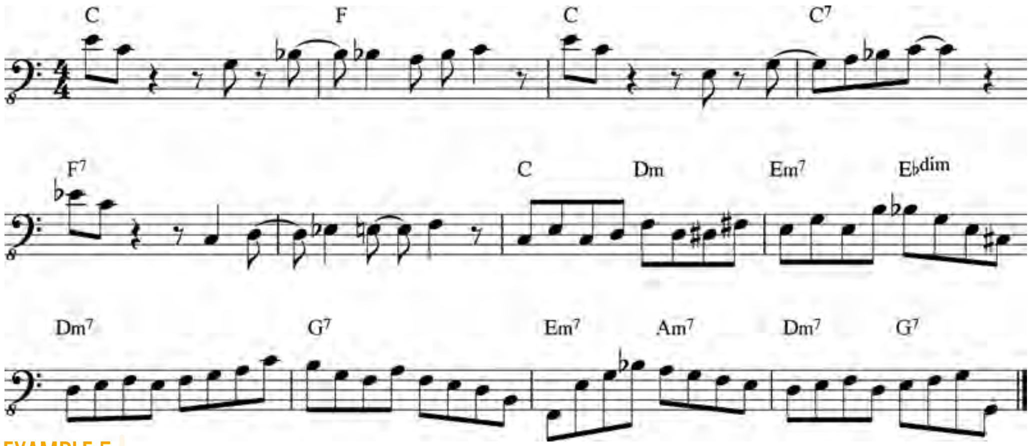
This idea takes one musical motif. Obviously you can add another one, play call and response with your riffs and develop a musical conversation between your ideas. Try wherever possible to add contrast: simple and complex, fast and slow, high and low, sound and space. Another good way of adding interest is to try various forms of syncopation and beat or phrase displacement: we can see this development of the ideas in **example 4** (including a change of chord in bar eight from Ebdim to Edim, just for variation). Note how in bar seven onwards we used a deliberate cross rhythm of 3+3+2 to break up the line rhythmically and keep the groove moving. At its extreme end you can play a whole solo with off beat notes. I've tried this on gigs (with a heavy tapping of right boot as a yardstick) and it can work well, but if other musos in the band aren't paying attention, they can lock in to the off beat and think it's the downbeat. 15/16 time, anyone?

Actually, you don't have to go to those extremes, and one approach is in **example 5**. If you place a note on the downbeat of selected bars (every two, four or more bars to taste), they can act as signposts in your solo as to where the downbeat lies, and keep the syncopations in perspective. It'll also help you not to get lost.

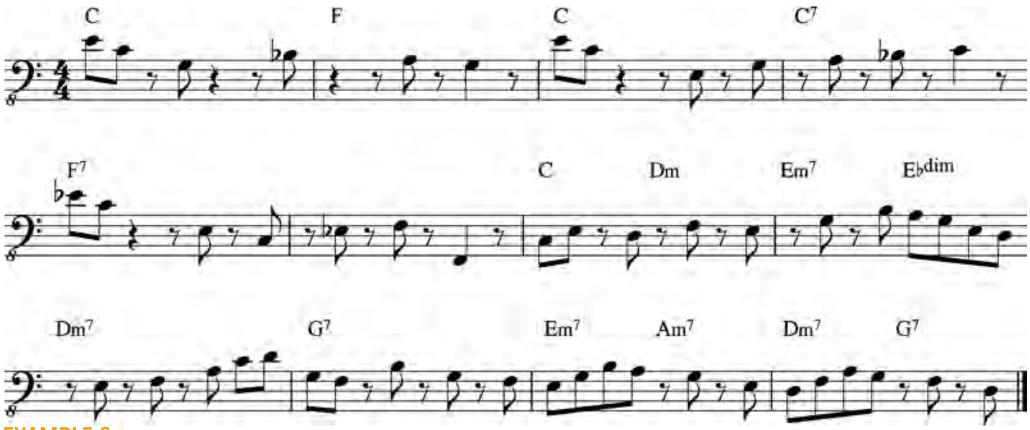
If we limit the syncopations and play on the beat or half beat, you can still add a lot of interest to solos with cross phrasing: threes over twos in various combinations and speeds. I've thrown in lots of ideas for **example 6** to get you going. We start with dotted crotchet/quarter notes which provide a good exercise in perception of cross rhythms: basically you're phrasing in 3/8 over 4/4, and the first beat of a bar can occur on any one of the three beats in the dotted eighth rhythm. If you count quavers/eighths, you're placing 3s against 2s: 123, 123, 123, 123 against 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +. In the fifth and sixth bars, and the last four bars, we have a rhythmic 3/4 phrase of two quavers and two crotchets across the beat, and in bars seven and eight a 3+3+2 quaver rhythm.

You don't have to use all this in one solo: so go easy! Take one idea, see what you come up with, then combine that with others in various ways. If a particular combo doesn't work, that's valuable info: knowing what does and doesn't work is equally valuable. The aim is to have something that has ideas, direction and interplay, with both melodic and chordal invention and rhythmic interest and contrast. It isn't an excuse to play as fast as you can – and we've all tried that. Both audiences and fellow musos love a double bass solo that's as lyrical and lucid as any other lead instrument.

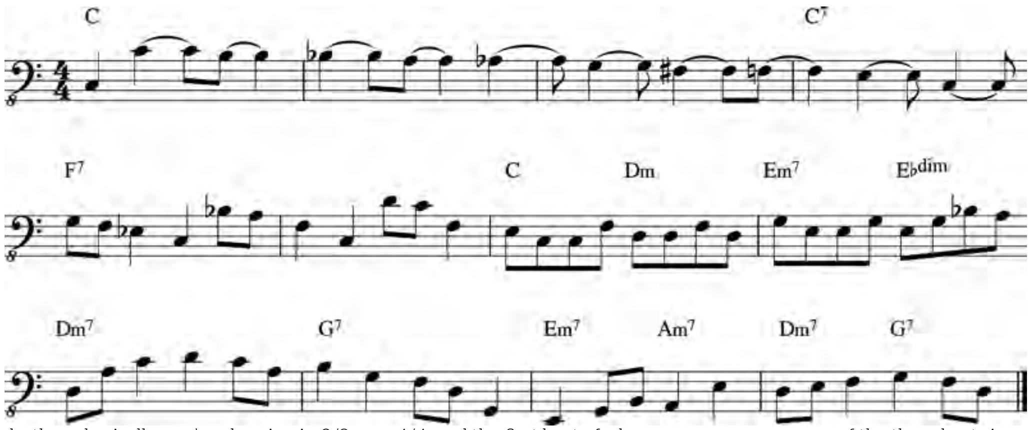
EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



EXAMPLE 6



STEVE LAWSON

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Stay focused and on mission, warns FX king Lawson

Right, so you've been experimenting with pedals for a while now, yes? You've introduced some cool overdrive sounds into your band's set, with nods of approval from the Rush-loving drummer, and a bit of chorus on one of the intros. But all those crazy noises you've been making in your practice room? The layers of delay and reverb, the space-freak-psychedelic-meltdown sounds that get you so hyped up late at night on headphones? Those have yet to find a home.

Here's one of the home truths of experimenting on bass – you're going to face resistance. Some of it will just be the guffaws of your bandmates when you suggest that the ballad needs you playing a delay-soaked melody instead of a bass-line, and some of it will be the righteous anger of YouTube's drooling keyboard-wielding self-appointed guardians of acceptability. "That's not a bass", "Why don't you just play guitar?" "You'd never get away with that in a real band"... Et cetera, ad nauseum.

So what do we do? Well, first up, we understand the difference between 'art' and 'the job'. If you're a plumber and you're hired to fix someone's central heating, building a sculpture out of pipes and radiator fittings in the client's living room, no matter how beautiful, is going to get you fired. That's not your job. The art may be amazing, but the context is wrong. Ditto with a band setting. If you're being hired, or if you're a member of a band that has a way of doing things, any experimentation needs to be way down the list of priorities to doing the job. That's not to say there aren't bits of it that can work, but it's not going to be your primary place for experimenting. Less so if it's a commercial covers band. Wedding gigs are not good places for your "What if Robert Fripp played bass?" explorations (though you may, as I have, get hired to play that kind of music during other moments at weddings – that's fun!)

So, find your space. It may be a solo project, it could be a collaboration or a completely new band built around a more experimental, searching approach to music-making. But it needs to be a safe space where you can make noises without worrying about the mouth-breathers who obsessively police what bass is 'supposed' to be. And don't get into arguments with those people. There aren't enough hours in the day to argue something so inane.

Make sure that the context is right – not just people, but the physical space and the tech too. If you need to play loud, with an acoustic drummer, for example, then make sure your sounds are together before you go into the rehearsal/experimental space. Get to know your setup, and learn how to troubleshoot it, so you're not leaving your fellow travellers sitting around while you work out how to stop the feedback loop coming out of your delay pedal. Then, put all the questions and the idiot voices of the crowd to one side, and create. It's not easy, but it is worthwhile. Expect resistance, but don't waste energy arguing about your right to make music. Find your tribe, explore the unknown, and make the music that you hear inside your head. And record everything.

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BAXTER ON BASS

This month, bass dealer extraordinaire Andy Baxter goes Tele-visual

Introduced in 1968, the Fender Telecaster bass was largely a reissue of the original 1951 Precision Bass before it took on its more recognisable contemporary design in 1957. With its thin Tele-style headstock, single pickup and large pickguard with separate chrome control plate, this essentially was a like-for-like substitute for the early P-Bass. Indeed, some Telecaster prototype models were partially constructed from surplus early-50s Precision parts.

The Telecaster bass's headstock decal was altered in early versions, but the third and most generally used decal had a silver Fender script with the words 'Telecaster Bass' underneath. This can be seen on the 1969 model at Andy Baxter Bass, pictured below. The Tele Bass soon received some modifications and its second series was introduced in 1971. The traditional pickguard with metal control plate was reshaped to become a one-piece pickguard and, most prominently, the Tele Bass's single-coil pickup was replaced with a larger, higher-output humbucker, which was moved from the middle of the body and repositioned up against the neck.

The Telecaster Bass was manufactured throughout the 70s until it was discontinued towards the end of 1979. Nowadays, you can pick up Squier's Vintage Modified Precision, based on Fender's second version of the Telecaster Bass as well as Fender's Modern Player Telecaster Bass. Pictured is a nicely matched pair of blonde Fender Tele basses with maple fingerboards in stock at Andy Baxter's showroom in Hoxton, London. These are a 1969 model, which is 100 per cent original, and an early 1972 model with one-piece pickguard and humbucker pickup – again, all original with the exception of the case. Both basses remain in excellent condition and are an iconic part of Fender's bass heritage.

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